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ABSTRACT

This study utilized qualitative methods to examine the social interactions that occur within supported employment settings between workers with disabilities and nondisabled co-workers. The study also examined the job supports at work settings, to understand the relationship between formal, job coach support services and natural job supports. Seven employees were studied in supported employment settings, using participant observation and interviews. Settings included a nursing home, a department store, a transportation company, two restaurants, a hospital, and a school. Findings are organized around seven common themes, including the low-status context of supported employment, the atypical design of supported job positions which were structured into an unvarying sequence of tasks, the importance of social interaction, the restricted social participation of supported employees, the importance of natural supports, the hidden messages of job coaches, and discrepant perceptions of supported employees. It was found that job coaching interfered with mentoring for supported employees, and job coaches did not teach participation in social customs. As a result, supported employees received less natural support than their co-workers. Despite these problems, supported employees had become accepted members of the work setting. Includes approximately 75 references. (JDD)

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# THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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# The Social Integration of Supported Employees:

## A Qualitative Study

David C. Hagner
Director of Planning and Research
New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council

1989

This study is one of a series of qualitative research reports and monographs on social relationships in the lives of people with developmental disabilities in the community being prepared by or disseminated through the Center on Human Policy as part of the Research and Training Center on Community Living (University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago and Syracuse University). For further information on this research series, contact:

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Dr. Hagner is a consultant to the Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University and is currently Director of Planning and Research at the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council.

# ABSTRACT

This study utilized qualitative methods to examine the social interactions that occur within supported employment settings between workers with disabilities and nondisabled co-workers. The study also examined the job supports at work settings, to understand the relationship between formal, job coach support services and natural job supports.

Through supported employment, adults with moderate and severe disabilities have begun to achieve employment outside of sheltered workshops and activity centers, in typical community businesses. One approach to supported employment is the "job coach" model, whereby a job coach accompanies the employee to his or her job, systematically teaches the job to the employee, and then gradually decreases his or her time at the setting. Supported employment aims at the integration of supported employees with their co-workers and supervisors.

In this study, seven supported employment settings were studied using participant-observation and interviews. Settings included a nursing home, a department store, a transportation company, two restaurants, a hospital, and a school. Job coaches had completed initial training and were intermittently present.

All supported employees held entry-level, low status jobs. Most jobs involved cleaning work. Co-workers were uncommitted to their jobs and positions turned over frequently. Two or more co-workers often worked together and interacted to perform joint tasks and solve work problems. Additional social interactions spilled over from formal interactions, often in the form of joking or teasing. Slower times and break times were utilized for socializing, and special social customs had developed at many settings. Most employees had one or two work friends. Supported employees participated in all of these interactions, but in general interacted less than their co-workers. Supported jobs were often special positions, without a close co-worker. These positions had been structured to eliminate many possibilities for interactions.

Employees received support from experienced co-worker "mentors" and from their work friends. Job coaching interfered with mentoring for supported employees, and job coaches did not teach participation in social customs. As a result, supported employees received less natural support than their co-workers. Despite these problems, supported employees were perceived as "like anybody else" and had become accepted members of the work setting.

# CHAPTER I

## BACKGROUND

One of the most significant recent innovations in services to persons with severe disabilities has been the development of supported employment. As a result of the dissemination of supported employment service technology and the emergence of legislation, regulations and funding streams for supported employment, large numbers of persons with severe disabilities who were previously considered suitable only for segregated programs in sheltered workshops or activity centers are employed at jobs in community businesses and industries.

A major motivating force behind the supported employment movement has been the belief that people with severe disabilities are capable of and entitled to fuller community participation and integration. Wehman and Moon (1987) list integration as the primary "critical value" in supported employment programs, and Brown, Shiraga, York, Kessler, Strohm, Rogan, Sweet, Zanella, VanDeventer, and Loomis (1984) have argued that integration is the "central issue" in vocational services.

What does it mean for a person with a severe disability to fully --or more fully--participate in community life? What does it mean to be or become integrated? More specifically, what does it mean for a person to be integrated into a community work setting? This issue is by no means simple or clear. General information is unsatisfactory, as Brown, Shiraga, Albright, Kessler, Bryson, VanDeventer, and Loomis (1987) have noted:

> While 29 of the 32 graduates functioned in integrated settings and performed real work next to nondisabled co-workers, specific kinds of social interactions and relationships must be analyzed in greater detail. Are friendships developing? Do frequent and normalized interactions occur between workers with and without disabilities to grow and produce as much as possible? Are attitudes of acceptance and support in the integrated workplace improving? (p. 37)

The study reported here investigated the social integration of employees with severe disabilities in supported employment settings. An overview of supported employment is provided in the first section of this chapter. The following sections discuss integration as it relates to supported employment, review current literature on workplace social interactions, and define the purpose of the research.

## Overview of Supported Employment

Supported employment is defined by the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration as "competitive work in an integrated work setting with on-going support services for individuals with severe handicaps for whom competitive employment (a) has not traditionally occurred, or (b) has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of severe handicaps" (34 C.F.R. Part 363.7).

Supported employment programs place individuals with severe disabilities directly into community jobs and offer an array of services to insure employment success. As compared with the follow-up services that accompanied traditional job placement, supported employment services are (a) more intensive and systematic, (b) more comprehensive (i.e. taking into account transportation and other work related concerns), and (c) of longer or even indefinite duration (Wehman & Kregel, 1985).

Most individualized supported employment programs are variations on a model referred to as the supported jobs model or more accurately the job coach model (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988). In the job coach model, a rehabilitation agency staff person variously known as a job coach, job trainer, placement and training specialist, or employment coordinator provides support services to a worker with a severe disability working at a job in the community. The job coach performs multiple tasks, including some that take place away from the employment site (Wehman & Melia, 1985). On-site job coach responsibilities include systematic instruction in job tasks and other required skills and non-instructional interventions collectively termed "advocacy" (Wehman & Melia, 1985).

Systematic instruction includes analyzing a job into a series of small steps, providing prompts, feedback, demonstrations, and other forms of instruction, and collecting data. Advocacy is defined in one job coach manual (Moon, Goodall, Barcus & Brooke, 1986) as "any activity performed by a job trainer which promotes a retarded worker's success in a competitive job" (p. 75). Examples of advocacy provided by the authors include (a) establishing rapport with supervisors and co-workers, (b) explaining training techniques and involving supervisors and co-workers in training, (c) explaining a supported employee's disability, background, and behavioral characteristics to co-workers, and (d) encouraging co-workers to socialize with a supported employee and modeling appropriate ways of doing it. Both systematic instruction and advocacy are believed to be essential to job retention in supported work programs (Wehman & Kregel, 1985). As a supported employee masters job tasks, job coaches gradually fade their presence at a work site, eventually remaining involved through periodic visits or telephone contacts.

## Integration and Supported Employment

In connection with supported employment, "integrated" is used to mean a number of different things. Integrated is often defined to mean work in a setting not designed as a facility for persons with handicaps. Wehman, Kregel, Barcus and Schalock (1986) had this meaning in mind when they stated that "emphasis needs to be placed on training that occurs as much as possible in integrated, as opposed to exclusively handicapped, facilities" (p. 117).

Other authors define an integrated setting more narrowly. Specific numerical standards for integration were proposed by Brown et. al. (1987): No more than two people with severe disabilities should work in any immediate work area, and the total number of persons with severe disabilities within any general work area should approximate the natural proportion (.01) of persons with severe disabilities in the general population.

Federal supported employment regulations offer a different definition of an integrated setting. A setting is integrated if the majority of workers at the setting are not disabled and either (a) supported employees are not part of a group of workers with disabilities or (b) if they are part of a group, the group size is no larger than eight and the workers with disabilities have regular contact with nondisabled individuals other than personnel providing support services in the immediate work setting (34 C.F.R. Part 363.7 a).

Other definitions of integration link it even more closely to contact or interactions with nondisabled co-workers. Everson (1988) defines "integrated work" as "employment within a typical work setting in which the person with a disability works in close proximity to, and interacts with, nondisabled workers other than human services support personnel" (p. 15). Everson's definition is more stringent than the Federal definition in one sense, but less so in another. The requirement that interactions take place between workers with disabilities and their nondisabled co-workers in any employment, not merely when workers with disabilities are employed in groups, is a more stringent definition of integration. However, the Federal definition requires that contacts be regular, while Everson's definition does not. More importantly, the absence of any reference to a number or proportion of persons with handicaps within a setting as a criterion for integration allows for the "integrated" employment of indefinitely large groups of persons with handicaps, according to Everson's definition.

Nisbet and Callahan (1987) define integration primarily by example: "Integration means working alongside and sharing responsibilities with nondisabled co-workers; taking breaks, having lunch, and attending a happy hour with their nondisabled peers; receiving instruction from company supervisor; learning from their nondisabled co-workers; and being valued employees of the company"

(p. 184). Integration according to this definition is clearly interactional, roughly corresponding to what is sometimes called social integration, where social integration is distinguished from physical integration (e.g. Wolfensberger & Thomas, 1983, p. 18).

Some discussions of integration go beyond the requirements that settings be natural, that the number or percent of persons with handicaps be small, and that interactions occur or occur regularly. These discussions stress qualitative features of social interactions and/or the attitudes or perceptions of persons involved in those interactions.

Sometimes perceptions are given more emphasis. For Wolfensberger and Thomas (1983), social integration requires that interactions be normative, defined as "not perceived or experienced...as odd, peculiar, outlandish, or...deserving of unusual attention" and "within the range of the 'expectable' or consistent with an aspired norm" (p. 18).

Higher quality or positive interactions are stressed by other authors. For Taylor, Racino, Knoll, and Lutfiyya (1987) "integration means that people should have the opportunity to interact with other people, to form close relationships, and to achieve full participation in community life" (p. 54). Nisbet and Callahan (1987) have in a sense combined both emphases, by listing examples of positive interactions but emphasizing social perception (that employees be valued).

## Interactions and Supports in the Workplace

Several strands of rehabilitation research have investigated the social behavior of employees with disabilities in the workplace. Worker interactions, working relationships, and job supports have also been investigated "generically"; that is, outside the disciplines of special education and rehabilitation.

Within rehabilitation, the belief that "concentration on physical capacities and tolerance will go for naught if skills for the management of personal affairs and congenial social exchange are ignored" (Sankovsky, 1971, p. 9) has long been commonplace. Two strands of research have emerged as adults with severe disabilities began to demonstrate the ability to work in community settings.

The first strand consists of analyses of the social skills required at work, through studies of reasons for job loss (Foss & Peterson, 1981; Greenspan & Shoultz, 1981; Hanley-Maxwell, Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch & Renzaglia, 1986) and surveys of employer job requirements (Rusch, Schutz & Agran, 1982; Burton, Chavez & Kohaska, 1987). These studies highlighted the subtlety of workplace social expectations and behavior and the need for specificity and detail in delineating the social requirements of jobs. For example, Hanley-Maxwell, Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch and Renzaglia (1986) speculated that the use of an a priori classification scheme may be less helpful than an analysis of individual reasons for job loss. And Rusch, Schutz, and Agran (1982) noted that the requirements of employers vary across particular communities and that general information can only provide a general guide. Any particular employment setting has its own particular social requirements. As a result, there has been an increasing emphasis on the use of "normative" or "ecological" analysis (Karan & Knight, 1986; Wehman, Renzaglia & Bates, 1985) to understand the social expectations of specific settings.

The second strand of research consists of intervention studies (Breen, Haring, Pitts-Conway & Gaylord-Ross, 1985; Chadsey-Rusch, Karlan, Riva & Rusch, 1984; Rusch & Menchetti, 1981) to demonstrate the acquisition of social skills by workers with severe disabilities. Intervention studies have provided powerful demonstrations of the ability of workers with severe disabilities to acquire a range of social behaviors and use them in work settings. However, there has been a tendency to select behaviors for instruction based on casual observation and to teach and observe them as isolated bits.

For example, Chadsey-Rusch, Karlan, Riva, and Rusch (1984) selected question-asking for instruction because the workers "had a deficit" in that area and because "it has value in establishing interactions" (p. 219). They did not establish where and when interactions took place at the setting, whether it was usual to ask repeated questions, or other details important to understanding the meaning of the behavior acquired. Breen, Haring, Pitts-Conway and Gaylord-Ross (1985) taught two workers with severe disabilities to ask their co-workers whether they wanted coffee during breaktime at community work settings. The training was successful, and co-workers responded to interactions initiated towards them but seldom extended those interactions further. It is difficult to evaluate this result without knowing the typical breaktime behavior and social norms at the settings involved. For example, perhaps offering coffee to co-workers was out of place and stigmatized the workers with disabilities as unusual; or alternatively, perhaps breaktime interactions typically consisted of only one verbal exchange and the lack of further interactions signified acceptance of the workers.

More recently, a third strand of research has developed, consisting of a variety of naturalistic, descriptive comparisons of social behavior in work settings. Nisbet and Vincent (1986) compared the inappropriate behavior and instructional interactions of employees at three sheltered and six community work settings. One of several findings was that instructional interactions between supervisors or co-workers and workers with severe disabilities occur far more frequently within community work settings than in sheltered settings.

Wacker, Berg, Visser, Egan, Berrie, Ehler, Short, Swatta, and Tasler (1986) investigated the incidental learning that took place when two students with severe disabilities received training at a community job. Incidental behaviors were new behaviors that were learned without being specifically targeted for instruction by a job trainer. Each student acquired several new behaviors through incidental learning, including initiating greetings, telling jokes, sharing snacks, and talking with co-workers.

Lignugaris/Kraft, Rule, Salzberg and Stowitschek (1986) compared the social interactions among workers with and without disabilities in two employment settings. These investigators found that all employees actively interacted in a variety of ways. Common social behavior included talking about a work-related topic, giving help or working cooperatively, and joking and laughing. The researchers found no significant difference in the amount or type of interactions engaged in by employees with or without disabilities, with the exception that more joking and laughing was observed on the part of nondisabled employees. Co-worker and supervisor assistance were common in both settings. Because both settings studied contained large groups of workers with disabilities, the majority of whom were mildly, not severely, disabled, the applicability of these findings to settings which meet the Federal standards for supported employment is questionable.

Social interactions and supports in the workplace have also been studied "generically", from the perspectives of business management and the sociology of work. A review of literature from these disciplines (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988) highlighted three consistent themes.

First, informal or "surplus" social interactions are prevalent at work. Informal interactions include brief comments, gestures and symbolic acts with shared meanings, joking and teasing, assistance in completing work, having coffee or meals together, conversations about personal life, asking and giving advice, teaching or demonstrating a work task, and so forth. Informal interactions serve to relieve boredom and a sense of powerlessness, facilitate completion of group work tasks, and maintain a sense of group solidarity.

Management theorists use the term "organizational culture" to describe the set of shared beliefs, meanings, and informal customs prevalent within a work setting (Sathe, 1983; Schein, 1985; Smircich, 1983; Wilkins, 1983). Cultures are produced as a group of employees share common experiences and solve problems together over time (Schein, 1985). The products of organizational cultures include rituals, legends, ceremonies, and specialized language (Smircich, 1983). The norms of a culture include rules for passing on the culture to new members (Sathe, 1983).

Informal interactions also result in the establishment of working relationships among co-workers (Gabarro, 1987). Henderson and Argyle (1985) identified four levels of working relationships: (a) social friends, with whom the employee spent some non-work time; (b) work friends, with whom an employee frequently interacted informally (including during break times) and gave and received assistance; (c) work mates, with whom an employee interacted on a daily basis but primarily regarding work-related topics; and (d) conflict relationships.

A second finding has been that patterns of interactions are often unique to individual work settings. Distinct cultural features have been noted at different settings even though the work performed at each setting was similar and the settings were part of the same company (Amsa, 1985; Peponis, 1985). Partly because social behavior is largely setting-specific, researchers have emphasized the importance of long-term observations (Hirszowicz, 1982) and qualitative research methods (Sathe, 1983).

Third, support has been found to be a natural feature of work settings. Researchers have documented the availability and importance of support concerning a wide variety of work and non-work related problems. Support can be defined by reference to supportive behavior, as the provision of attention and reassurance or the offering of material assistance (Pearson, 1982). Other researchers prefer to define support as the feeling or perception of being valued and a part of a network of communication and mutual obligation (Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987). In a work context, support can include practical help and information related to work or to personal problems, as well as purely affective expressions of solidarity and caring, which facilitate job performances or satisfaction (Burke, Weir & Duncan, 1976; Mitchell, Billings & Moos, 1982). Support is provided to workers both horizontally, by their co-workers, and vertically, by their supervisors. Orth, Wilkinson, and Benfari (1987) noted that many effective managers adopt the role of a coach towards their subordinates.

Support is closely related to interactions among workers (Kirmeyer & Lin, 1987). Feldman (1977) found that feelings of acceptance by one's co-workers preceded new employees' feelings of competence. He speculated that until they became well established as a member of a network of informal customs and communications, employees were unable to obtain information and assistance crucial to the satisfactory performance of their jobs.

The support that is referred to in the literature on the sociology of work and business management is available naturally within work environments. Therefore, for our purposes, it can be referred to as natural support (Nisbet & Callahan, 1987), to distinguish it from the support that is meant by the term "supported employment"; that is, support provided by human service agencies to persons with disabilities.

## Purpose of the Research

While persons with severe disabilities have to some extent been placed in community settings, they have not always become a part of those settings (Bogdan & Taylor, 1987). The purpose of the present study was to describe the level of participation, or social integration, achieved by workers with severe disabilities through supported employment. That entailed an understanding of the typical patterns of behavior within individual work settings, and of the interactions among setting participants. Since integration can also involve the way in which one is perceived, an understanding of how supported employees are perceived--what beliefs are held about them, how their behavior is interpreted, and so forth--is essential to understanding their integration.

Supported employment personnel, the job coaches who accompany supported employees, represent a third party whose presence must be understood to gain a complete picture of supported employment. It is particularly important to ascertain how the "advocacy" function is carried out by practicing job coaches, and what relationship exists between job coaching as it is described in supported employment literature and training manuals, and job coaching as it is practiced.

Systematic instruction and behavior management techniques have been highly effective in special, segregated environments. It is important to understand the impact of importing such techniques into natural settings. Related to this is the relationship between internal and external sources of job support. Long before the advent of formal supported employment services, natural community environments developed internal mechanisms for providing training and support to employees. It is important to examine these two systems, the system of natural support internal to the work organization, and supported employment services imported from an external source, and to understand how they relate.

Research questions were developed to investigate four topic areas related to the integration of workers with severe disabilities in supported employment settings. Specific questions, descriptive in nature, involved the nature of supported jobs and settings, the interactions among setting participants, the supports provided to employees, and the perceptions of setting participants.

1. What are the characteristics of supported jobs and employment settings? What are the job responsibilities of supported employees and what is the job function of supported employees in relation to the company or department in which they are employed? Which other employees share the same work setting as supported employees? How do the wages, work schedules, working conditions, or other aspects of supported job positions relate to other positions within a work setting?

2. What social interactions take place at supported employment settings? What interactions occur between supported employees and their co-workers and supervisors? How do these interactions compare with interactions among nondisabled co-workers and between co-workers and supervisors? In what ways do the periodic visits of job coaches affect the behavior of other setting participants? Do supported employees, co-workers, or supervisors interact differently when job coaches are absent then when they are present?

3. What supports are provided to employees within supported employment settings? To what extent do co-workers provide natural support for each other, or supervisors provide support for their subordinates? Are natural supports provided to other employees; and if so, how do they compare with natural supports provided to other

employees? When supported employees experience problems at work and a job coach is not present, how are the problems resolved? What ongoing support is provided to supported employees by job coaches? Are supported employment services limited to job coaching, or are other kinds of support provided?

4. How do participants in supported employment settings perceive one another? How are employees with severe disabilities perceived by their co-workers and by others within the work organization? How do supported employees view their co-workers and their supervisors? How do supported employees and other members of the organization perceive job coaches? What other persons (e.g. company customers, agency administrators) hold perceptions relevant to the participation of supported employees in work settings?

# CHAPTER II

# METHODOLOGY

An understanding of the social integration of supported employees requires attention to both the fine-grained details of social processes within supported employment settings and to the meaning of events to the participants. Both requirements are ideal for the application of qualitative or ethnographic research methods (Erickson, 1986). The detailed qualitative study of specific social situations, sometimes known as micro-ethnography, has been applied to a wide variety of settings (Spradley, 1980). Within vocational rehabilitation, qualitative methods have been utilized to examine the social interactions within sheltered work settings (Turner, 1981) and vocational evaluation settings (Murphy & Hagner, 1988). Qualitative methods have also been employed to study the social organization of typical workplaces, such as banks (Schneider, Parkington & Buxton, 1980), police departments (VanMaanen, 1975), and factories (Amsa, 1986). Within sociology, Sandler (1982), Thompson (1983) and others have studied the social interactions within work settings using qualitative methods. Das (1983) and Schein (1985) have recommended the use of qualitative methods to study the cultures of work settings.

The present study utilized both participant-observation and semi-structured interview methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). The selection of settings and the process of data collection and analysis are discussed in the following sections.

## Settings and Participants

Four supported employment agencies in central New York were asked to nominate up to two supported settings each for study, based on the following criteria:

1. No more than two supported employees should work at any one setting, to insure that individual jobs were studied rather than group placements.

2. Each setting should involve employment for pay, rather than merely training or volunteer work.

3. Each supported employee should be considered by the supported employment agency and state Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) as having a severe disability.

4. Supported employees should be successfully employed beyond an initial training or adjustment period, so that (a) the agency considered the setting a successful example of supported employment and (b) job coach presence was not continual but job coaches had to some degree "faded out."

Three agencies nominated two work settings, and one agency nominated one setting. Company managers, supported employees and other workers at each setting were informed of the study and agreed to participate.

### Settings and Company Characteristics

For consistency, the term "company" hereafter refers to a work organization that provides employment to a supported employee and other employees. "Agency" refers to a human service organization which provides placement and support services to persons with disabilities. "Setting" refers to the physical premises--

building(s) or section(s) of a building and adjacent grounds--where the work of a supported employee and his or her co-workers is performed. The seven companies and settings are described below.

1. Sunny Haven is a large, old nursing home in an urban area. Employees at the setting include the director, office workers, nursing and other resident care staff, food service workers, and a maintenance and housekeeping department. One of the housekeepers is a supported employee. The setting consisted of the entire building, including rooms, hallways, common areas, office and storage areas.

2. Grants is a large suburban department store owned by an interstate corporation. The back section of the store consists of a large stock room, office, and an employee lunch room. This is the work setting for a supported employee, five co-workers, and a receiving clerk who is also the department supervisor. Floor salespersons are occasionally assigned to work in the stock room, and all store employees utilize the lunch room.

3. Ride-A-Van is a medical transport company which employs a supported employee as the janitor. Requests for transportation to medical appointments are received by a dispatcher and forwarded to one of several drivers. Ride-A-Van also employs office employees, an office manager, and three vehicle mechanics. The setting includes offices, hallways, the kitchen, two garages and a parking lot.

4. Jiffy Burger is a busy fast food hamburger chain franchise. Either the manager or one of the three assistants managers supervises a crew of food preparation workers and cashiers, a dining room bus person, a maintenance person and a dishwasher. Employee work schedules are staggered so that the size and composition of the work

crew changes several times during the day. Employed as the bus person, a supported employee works mainly in the dining room, but the work setting also includes the food preparation and storage area behind the serving counter, an outdoor dining area.

5. The Clinton Inn is a large suburban restaurant with several dining rooms, a bar, kitchen, serving area, dishwashing area, and storage rooms. Patronage during lunch--when a supported employee works as a dishwasher and cleaner--is fairly light. Ordinarily two waitresses, a hostess, a cook, a food preparation person, and the restaurant manager are on duty in addition to the supported employee.

6. City Hospital is a large private health care facility in an urban area. The dietary department consists of a dishroom and storage area on the ground floor, and a preparation, cooking and serving area on the floor above. A dishroom supervisor is responsible for the dishroom employees and stock workers on the lower level. A supported employee works on this level as well and has combined dishwashing and food preparation duties.

7. Holy Rosary School is a parochial elementary and middle school. The cafeteria and kitchen, gym and locker rooms, and art and music rooms are located in the basement of the building. Cleaning these areas was the responsibility of the supported employees. Other employees who worked on that floor included cafeteria workers, the gym teacher, and the art and music teachers. A teacher assigned to supervise the lunch period, and a parish maintenance worker were on-site periodically. TABLE I lists the companies and settings studied, type of business and supported employee job positions.

## TABLE I

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SETTINGS

| Company | Type of Business | Supported Employee Position | Co-workers* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sunny Haven | Nursing Home | Housekeeper | 6 |
| Grants | Department Store | Stock Marker | 5 |
| Ride-A-Van | Transportation | Janitor | 14 |
| Jiffy Burger | Fast Food Rest. | Bus Person | 11 |
| Clinton Inn | Restaurant | Dishwasher | 5 |
| City Hospital | Hospital | Food Preparer | 9 |
| Holy Rosary | School | Janitor | 9 |

*Typical number in immediate setting during supported employee work hours.

## Supported Employee Characteristics

One supported employee was employed at each work setting. The supported employees varied in age, disability label, and work history. Four supported employees had previously worked sheltered workshops. One of these, Richard F., had also previously participated in a work enclave. But for Edward P., Timothy M., and James W., their jobs at Jiffy Burger, the Clinton Inn, and Holy Rosary School were their first employment experience outside of a sheltered workshop.

Richard F. is a friendly, outgoing individual whose disabilities are considered to be mild mental retardation and traumatic brain injury. He resides in a group home and independently uses the public bus system and sometimes also a bicycle to get around the city. Richard makes comments that people call "wisecracks," which sometimes annoy people, and he joins in or listens to other people's conversations to a degree that some people accuse him of "not minding his own business." The agency considered these behaviors, as well as a tendency to lose track of the sequence of tasks he has been assigned, as his vocational limitations.

Edward P. is a quiet slow-moving man who appears to be older than his mid-forties. He walks with a shuffling gate and stooped-over posture, and his hair and clothes look disheveled at times. Edward takes a while to get to know people, and there are many people whom he dislikes. He answers questions with one word or syllable, but those who know him well consider him to be friendly, enthusiastic at times, and easy to understand. Edward resides in a group home, and his social activities are limited to those provided by the staff of the residence. He is labeled severely mentally retarded.

Timothy M. is considered to have a long-term psychiatric illness, paranoid schizophrenia. He lives in a supervised apartment and travels independently to work, stores, and other community settings. Timothy dresses sloppily at times. Because he moves slowly and speaks in a somewhat expressionless tone of voice, he strikes people as sleepy. But Timothy enjoys talking with people and often initiates conversation. He is known for drinking a lot of coffee and smoking cigarettes a great deal.

James W. is a loud, boisterous individual. He asks many questions, including some that people find inappropriate, laughs a great deal, and sometimes acts in silly manner. He resides with his family, and uses public transportation independently.

Two supported employees had no work history prior to obtaining their supported jobs. Both Brenda P. and Robert L. participated in day treatment programs prior to their employment at Sunny Haven and City Hospital, and continued to divide their day between a supported job and attendance at a day treatment program.

Brenda P. resides with her sister, and is labelled severely mentally retarded. She smiles readily but seldom speaks. People have difficulty understanding what she says. She appears to walk unsteadily, often holding onto a wall or furniture when she walks as if she is afraid of falling. She depends on her sister or her day treatment program for transportation and activities.

Robert L. resides in a group home and is labelled severely mentally retarded. He is thought of as a "moody" individual, friendly and even silly some days but grumpy and angry on other days.

He enjoys talking with people but speaks in hard-to-understand single syllables, supplemented by gestures. Other than the bus trip to work, Robert L. is dependent on group home staff for community participation.

The seventh supported employee, Linda F., had recently graduated from secondary school. She had received vocational training at two community work settings as a student and the supported employment agency obtained a job for her a few months after graduation. Grants was her first paid employer. Linda appears shy and self-conscious, but her speech is fluent and easy to understand. She resides in a group home, uses public transportation to get to work, and is labelled moderately mentally retarded.

Four supported employees held part-time jobs. In the case of Brenda P., job hours were arranged by agency staff so that she could continue to participate in a day treatment program the other half-day and be transported to and from the job by the agency. Work hours were arranged according to the nature of the job and needs of the employer for the other three part-time employees.

Three other employees worked longer hours, although they did not hold what most people would call a full-time jobs. Edward P. worked a five-hour shift each day at Jiffy Burger. Richard F. and Timothy M. worked a six-hour day at their supported jobs. TABLE II summarizes supported employee characteristics and work schedules.

## Agency and Job Coach Characteristics

Work Services and Placement Services each nominated two work settings for study. Both were large, well-established rehabilitation facilities which operated sheltered workshops and other programs but

## TABLE II

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS

| Supported Employee | Age | Disability Label | Residence | Work Hours | Months Employed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brenda P. | 31 | Severe Mental Retardation | Sister's Home | 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM | 3 |
| Linda F. | 22 | Moderate Mental Retardation | Group Home | 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM | 5 |
| Richard F. | 29 | Mild Mental Retardation, Traumatic Brain Injury | Group Home | 8:00 AM - 2:30 PM | 7 |
| Edward P. | 44 | Severe Mental Retardation | Group Home | 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM | 6 |
| Timothy M. | 46 | Paranoid Schizophrenia | Supervised Apartment | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM | 6 |
| Robert L. | 26 | Severe Mental Retardation | Group Home | 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM | 6 |
| James W. | 35 | Moderate Mental Retardation | Family Home | 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM | 2 |

had also received funding to provide supported employment services. Work Services served almost exclusively persons with developmental disabilities, while Placement Services served persons with a variety of disabilities.

At Work Services, one staff person was responsible for contacting companies and developing jobs, and one of three job coaches was assigned to each supported employee once a job was secured. Placement Services also employed a job developer, but employed only one job coach, and therefore had to supplement its own staff with job coaches provided by the local OVR office.

Community Services and Transitional Services were newer, smaller agencies. Community Services nominated two settings for study, and Transitional Services nominated one. Both were primarily day treatment agencies, providing training in daily living skills and other non-remunerative developmental activities to adults with severe disabilities. Program participants were adults who had been viewed as unemployable and had been rejected by or never referred to vocational programs. The administrators of Community Services and Transitional Services disputed this view, and wanted to demonstrate the employment potential of program participants.

Community Services received state funding for a half-day supported employment program. The same staff member secured jobs and provided job coaching for supported employees. Transitional services did not have a formal supported employment program but provided supported employment services informally by assigning one staff member to develop part-time jobs for a small number of program participants. When a job was secured, the program contacted the local OVR office and the office supplied a job coach.

A total of five job coaches were assigned to the seven supported employees. The same individual was the job coach for Edward P. and Richard F., the supported employees served by Work Services. The agency administrator considered her the best of Work Services' three job coaches, and assigned her employees who might be more difficult to serve.

Placement Services provided a job coach for Timothy M. at the Clinton Inn, but utilized a job coach supplied by the local OVR office to provide support to James W. at Holy Rosary School. James W.'s job coach worked as an independent contractor for the local OVR office. Community Services always transferred job coaching responsibilities to a single staff member once a supported employee completed initial training, and so the same individual was responsible for providing support to both Linda F. and to Robert L. Transitional Services utilized a job coach provided by the local OVR office for its supported employment program. This individual also worked as an independent contractor.

Job coaches spent varying amounts of time at work settings, and decreased the amount as employees learned more of their job. The extent of job coach presence at each setting during the first week of observation is shown in TABLE III, along with job coach education and experience.

## Data Collection

Data was collected through participant-observation supplemented by semi-structured interviews and examination of documents. All data

## TABLE III

## SUPPORT AGENCIES AND JOB COACH CHARACTERISTICS

| Support Agency | Job Coach Education and Experience | Hours of Job Coach Contact | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Edward P. | Richard F. |
| Work Services | Liberal Arts B.A.<br>1 yr. Job Coach | Every day<br>2 hrs. | Every day<br>15 min. |
| | | Timothy M. | |
| Placement Services | Human Services B.A.<br>4 yrs. Voc. Rehab. | Every 3 wks.<br>15 min. | |
| | | James W. | |
| | Psychology B.A.<br>8 yrs. Human Services | Every day<br>2 hrs. | |
| | | Linda F. | Robert L. |
| Community Services | Rehab. Services B.A.<br>3 yrs. Voc. Rehab. | 2X/wk.<br>30 min. | Every day<br>15 min. |
| | | Brenda P. | |
| Transitional Services | No degree<br>No experience | Every day<br>2 hrs. | |

collection was conducted by the researcher. Each data source is discussed on the previous page.

## Participant-observation

Half-day participant-observation visits were conducted on 63 days for a total of 158 hours. Each setting was visited between eight and 11 times, on varying days of the week, over a period that ranged from seven to 14 weeks. Because the starting weeks of observation at settings were staggered, the complete data collection period spanned ten months.

Permission to conduct observations was received from the management of each setting. The initial role of the researcher within each setting was that of an observer. Two related difficulties had to be overcome in connection with this role. First, work settings are designed around the work activity that is performed within them. Unrelated activity, such as passive observation, can appear out of place. Second, participants within the settings studied were accustomed to visits in connection with supported employment services. It was natural to assume that the researcher was connected with the supported employment agency.

To minimize these difficulties, supervisors and co-workers were informed that the researcher was interested in the company or department as a whole. To reinforce this posture, on some visits observations were made of areas within each setting that did not involve the supported employee, and one visit was conducted at each setting when the supported employee was absent. Job coaches and supported employees were informed that no observations would be communicated to agency administrators, and this policy was strictly adhered to.

Locations from which to conduct unobtrusive observations were available at both restaurants, Jiffy Burger and the Clinton Inn, and at Ride-A-Van. Most of both restaurant settings could be observed from a customer booth or table in the dining area. In the case of Edward P., most of his work at Jiffy Burger took place in the dining area. Sitting in the kitchen area of Ride-A-Van was a common, accepted practice at that site because drivers waited there between "runs."

At Sunny Haven and City Hospital, it became possible for the researcher to adopt a participant role on several visits by filling in for absent employees. As a worker, the researcher became involved as a participant as well as an observer of the setting. Offers to perform volunteer work or to fill-in were made to managers of other work settings but opportunities were not available.

When possible, particularly during the last two or three observation sessions at each setting, the researcher participated in break and lunch conversations. During these times, to observe silently would have been more obtrusive than to participate to a moderate degree. Workers accepted this participation as natural and appropriate. On one occasion a co-worker told the researcher "You've been here too long; you're starting to act like us."

At Grants and Holy Rosary School, the researcher usually stood in an out-of-the-way location. Each of these was a large setting--a warehouse and a cafeteria--which easily accommodated an extra person.

Half-day (two and a half hour) visits fit in well with the temporal rhythm and work schedules at each setting. A typical observation routine for settings where supported employees worked part-time involved arriving at the site just after the employee began work and remaining until he or she had left, or arriving before the employee and remaining until nearly the end of his or her shift. In the case of employees who worked a longer day, half of the observations were conducted in the morning, and half in the afternoon, with the researcher either arriving before lunch break or leaving after lunch.

Since everyone and everything at a setting could not be observed all at once, one or two individuals or specific locations within each setting were the focal point for observation at any one time. Focal individuals were selected to include representatives of each of four main participant roles: supported employees, co-workers, supervisors, and job coaches. Supervisors were those individuals responsible for managing the work of the department or company and who had authority over the supported employee and his or her co-workers. Co-workers were non-supervisory company employees who worked within the same department, occupied the same physical setting, and/or interacted with a supported employee during work. Focal individuals and locations were varied across observation periods and occasionally within the same observation period, guided by the study research questions and by previous data. For example, the lounge at Ride-A-Van was found to be a central location for social interactions among co-workers, and consequently became a primary focus of observation during several subsequent visits.

Field notes were handwritten in a pocket-sized notebook. Entries were made either in an out-of-the-way location at the setting or immediately upon leaving the setting. These entries--often single words or sentence fragments--were then transcribed onto a word processing data disk in complete sentence form within one day. Field notes consisted of descriptions of the behavior and speech of setting participants who were observed during each visit.

### Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with agency and company personnel who were not participants in the daily routine at work settings but whose decisions and perceptions were relevant to the study. A total of 14 interviews were conducted, ranging from ten to 25 minutes in length.

Six interviews were held with agency administrators; one at each of the four agencies and follow-up interviews at Transitional Services and Work Services. Interviews were also conducted with the managers of each of the seven companies and with one OVR counselor. An agency administrator was the individual who coordinated the supported employment program and supervised the job coaches. A company manager was the individual at the highest managerial level at a work setting. At Jiffy Burger, the Clinton Inn, and Holy Rosary School, the supervisor of the supported employee was also the company manager. At the other four settings, the manager of the setting was the supervisor's supervisor.

One initial interview with each agency administrator occurred prior to the observation period and included the nomination of settings. Follow-up interviews were required in two cases where administrative decisions significantly affected the supported employee. The format, timing, and length of company manager interviews varied widely, but occurred during the end of the observation period at all but one company.

Interviews were conversational in nature, and reflected the unique characteristics and issues at each setting. For example, the manager at City Hospital had recently received complaints from other hospital employees about the conduct of the supported employee, and therefore the manager's perceptions of and responses to those complaints was the focal point for one interview.

### Examination of Organizational Documents

Further data were obtained in the form of relevant documents supplied by agencies and by companies. Documents consisted primarily of supported employment program descriptions disseminated by the four agencies and training data sheets utilized by the job coaches. Also included was a set of hand-outs on job coaching that one agency had developed for staff development purposes. Memoranda and notices that were distributed by company managers to employees during the course of the study were included as well.

## Data Analysis

The resulting 345 pages of raw data were analyzed using a constant-comparative, emergent theme approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser & Straus, 1967). Some analysis took place during the data collection phase itself, in the form of observer comments and a fieldwork memo.

Observer's comments of paragraph length or shorter were completed throughout the data collection period. These impressions and tentative themes were entered during the writing of fieldnotes, differentiated from observational descriptions. For example, when the researcher asked the manager of one setting who the supported employee's supervisor was, the manager responded that the job coach was the supervisor. When this event was recorded, an observer's comment was added which read "How much responsibility can they be taking?"

After fieldwork at five work settings was complete, a report on fieldwork progress and problems, or fieldwork memo (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), was completed. This memo tied together a number of observer comments and suggested several tentative findings and themes. Decisions about the focus of observations at the last two settings were guided by this memo. For example, many details of job coach behavior and perceptions were still unclear at that point, so job coaches were observed more extensively at the final two settings.

## Coding Categories

Analysis after data collection began with the assignment of a short descriptive phrase to each field note entry. For example, the phrase "job coach as supervisor" was assigned to the paragraph mentioned above in connection with observer comments. Other descriptive phrases included "co-workers complain about management," "supervisor sticks up for supported employee being teased," and "experienced worker trains new worker." The resulting 235 descriptive phrases described in more general terms the processes which were exemplified by the specific events observed and statements recorded and corresponded roughly to what LeCompte and Goetz (1984) have called "low-inference descriptors."

Descriptive phrases were further reduced to a list of 42 coding categories, based upon patterns of similarity among them. For example, "workers complain about management," "co-workers annoyed with supported employee question," and "worker yells at co-worker" were combined to form the coding category "Complaining." The phrase "job coach as supervisor" was combined with "supervisor concerned about job coach fading" and other related phrases to form the coding category "Company Perceptions of Job Coaches"; the phrases "job coach provides continual cues," "job coach works along as co-worker" and others formed the category "Formal Training by Job Coaches," and so forth.

Data reduction into coding categories by means of an intermediate list of descriptive phrases allowed data to be synthesized by means of two decisions. The first decision answered the question "Of what is this event or statement an example?" and the second question answered "What other descriptive phrases bear a similar relationship to the research questions of the study?" The coding categories are listed in Appendix A.

A three-letter code corresponding to each coding category was entered into fieldnotes in the margin alongside the paragraph(s) to which it was applicable. Thus each paragraph of data was assigned to one or more coding categories. The fieldnotes and interview transcriptions were then sorted by coding category, by means of a word processing program, to combine together all data paragraphs assigned to each category.

The results are presented in four sections, corresponding to the four topic areas of investigation. Individual findings were those social processes or beliefs that emerged as most prominent and that occurred repeatedly and across settings. For example, the coding category "Stimuli for Informal Interactions" contained descriptions of events such as "housekeepers work together and talk while working," "team unloading a truck led to joking," "extra comment when giving order to cook," and "help with sign-in sheet followed by teasing" at six settings. These events were the basis for one finding about interactions, that formal interactions often spill over into informal interactions.

The characteristics of supported jobs and settings comprised the context in which interactions, supports and perceptions occurred. Supported jobs are discussed in Chapter III.

Chapter IV describes the nature of social interactions that took place at supported employment settings among co-workers, between co-workers and their supervisors, between supported employees and their co-workers and supervisors, between job coaches and supported employees, and between job coaches and company co-workers and supervisors. Job supports provided to employees are discussed in Chapter V, including support provided by the supported employment agencies to supported employees and to their co-workers. Those interactions that directly assisted or facilitated the performance of an employee's job are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter VI presents findings related to how setting participants described and perceived each other. The perceptions of supported employees towards their job coaches, co-workers, and supervisors; the perceptions of company co-workers and supervisors towards each other, towards supported employees, and towards job coaches; and the perceptions of job coaches towards supported employees, co-workers and supervisors are discussed.

# CHAPTER III

# SUPPORTED JOBS

Interactions, supports, and perceptions occurred within the context of each work setting's business function and characteristic patterns of activity. The level of supervision, job functions of co-workers, and relationships of supported employee positions to those of their co-workers and agency job coach presence differed at each setting. The seven supported jobs are described below.

## Housekeeping at Sunny Haven Nursing Home

Ms. Brenda P. was one of three housekeepers at Sunny Haven. Other employees at the home consisted of residential care, food service, and office staff. Each of the two other housekeepers, one of whom was designated Head Housekeeper, worked four full days and one morning per week. Brenda's work schedule, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., five days per week, had been arranged by Transitional Services to fit in with its transportation schedule. An agency van transported Brenda to her job after lunch at the day treatment center, dropping her off at Sunny Haven when the other housekeepers were in the middle of their lunch break. The van returned in the afternoon, in the course of driving other day treatment program participants home.

The work coordinator from Transitional Services and the nursing home administrator had negotiated a list of cleaning tasks for Brenda P., tasks which the other housekeepers often didn't have time to complete. Her tasks included sweeping, mopping, dusting and vacuuming. The entire building was expected to be cleaned each week, so a different set of tasks was scheduled for each day. The work coordinator took photographs of every task and arranged them into a Monday book, a Tuesday book, etc. Each book was a different color, and Brenda was supposed to learn "what color day it was" and take that day's book with her as a reference for each day's schedule.

Brenda P. was employed at the minimum wage. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation reimbursed the company for part of her wages for the first six months, in accordance with a schedule of gradually decreasing amounts. OVR also recruited and paid the salary of the job coach who was assigned to help her learn the job. This job coach kept in frequent contact with the day treatment program work coordinator.

Brenda P. had been initially described by agency staff as "doing well," and when participant-observation visits began the job coach had begun fading by arriving one hour later than Brenda each day. But the administrator began to bring job performance problems to the job coach's attention, and after four weeks the job coach reverted to staying with Brenda for the full time. Fading was never resumed, and Brenda was terminated from employment after six months. The termination occurred at the end of a week in which she had missed two days of work, and erratic attendance--one of several job performance problems noted earlier by the company manager--was given as a primary reason.

Other factors were probably involved as well. The six month point coincided with the end of OVR wage reimbursements.

Additionally, the termination coincided with the end of spring cleaning. A fourth housekeeper had been hired by the company on a temporary basis to help with spring cleaning. This individual had not had any problems, and was offered permanent employment when Brenda P. was let go. Brenda was the only unsuccessful supported employee during the study, and her termination is discussed further in Chapter VI.

## Marking Stock at Grants Department Store

Ms. Linda F. was employed in the receiving department of Grants, to mark each week's sale merchandise. Marking consisted of setting a "gun" to a sequence of numbers that match those on the side of a carton, and using the gun to place price stickers on each item.

Marking took place in the back, storeroom section, a large open area divided into aisles by cartons of stock. Other storeroom employees included the supervisor, a stock handler, two other markers, and a merchandise display assembler. The other markers handled non-sale merchandise, and divided their time between the storeroom and the selling floor. Linda F. was the only employee who performed exclusively one task.

Storeroom employees worked either from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., five days per week. Linda F. worked part time, from 8:00 a.m. until noon, four days per week, because those hours were sufficient to keep up with sale merchandise. Full-time storeroom employees ate lunch together in the employee lounge between 12:00 and 12:30, and took a short morning and afternoon break singly or in pairs. Linda F. used the lounge to have a morning break snack,

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but her day ended at noon and she ate her lunch at home.

The stock marker position was unfilled at the time Community Services contacted Grants, and the last few employees had not stayed with the company long. Grants agreed to a slight modification in work hours to coincide with Linda F.'s bus schedule. She received slightly above the minimum wage, the same starting wage as other employees.

Linda F.'s first job coach had been replaced by a follow-along job coach, who visited approximately once a week for about an hour.

The manager considered Linda F. a satisfactory employee. However, she experienced occasional short lay-offs when no marking work was available, and her work week was reduced from four to three days during a seasonal sales slump.

### Janitorial Work at Ride-A-Van Medical Transportation

As the janitor, Mr. Richard F. was responsible for general cleaning of the office and garage areas at Ride-A-Van. His job tasks included cleaning and vacuuming offices and hallways, cleaning the kitchen and three bathrooms, emptying trash, and sweeping the garage and parking lot. The office manager served as his immediate supervisor. Other company employees included a dispatcher, three clerical employees, three mechanics, and 11 drivers. A smaller staff worked in the evening and overnight, including a night janitor. The night janitor performed several maintenance duties in addition to basic cleaning: painting, furnace upkeep, and so forth.

Clerical workers and mechanics spent their work day in the office and garage, respectively. The clerical workers generally left the building for lunch, whereas the mechanics and other employees ate lunch in the building. Drivers went on "runs" to transport elderly people or people with disabilities to medical appointments. Some runs were scheduled on a regular basis and others were responses to specific calls. At any one time between two and five drivers were in the building. These drivers waited in a lounge area and talked, read the newspaper, drank coffee and ate lunch, or watched TV until summoned for their next run by the dispatcher.

Richard F. worked full time, at minimum wage. His duties and schedule were similar to those of the previous janitor.

Initial job coach training had been completed several months earlier, but had resumed at the company's request because Richard was not completing all his work tasks. When the study began, this second job coach was on site approximately half of each day, but she gradually decreased her visits to about a one-hour visit every other day. The problems that prompted reintervention were resolved to the satisfaction of the company.

## Bussing Tables at Jiffy Burger

Mr. Edward P. worked as a bus person, clearing and wiping dining room tables, cleaning spills, taking out trash, sweeping, mopping, and cleaning windows. As with all non-managerial employees, he worked a five-hour shift, five days per week. Edward's hours were scheduled to coincide with the busy lunch period. Due to bus schedule problems he was not required to work on weekends, but his work was in other respects the same as that of the employee he had replaced. Usually ten other workers were on duty at Jiffy Burger, including a manager, food preparers, a dishwasher, counter employees, and one general maintenance person. Work shifts were staggered so that workers each started and ended at a different time.

Turnover was high at Jiffy Burger. With the exception of managers and the supported employee, only two other individuals remained employed over a three-month period. Workers evidenced little commitment to the company, their supervisor, or their occupation. One counter worker reported that "This isn't my real job."

During the peak lunch period, the maintenance person and Edward worked in front of the serving counter, in the dining room, while the manager and other workers worked in the kitchen and serving areas. The maintenance person's shift ended soon after Edward's began. Before and after lunch the restaurant was less busy, and during those times workers were given a break. Workers generally took breaks in pairs, always at one particular restaurant booth. The manager also checked the dining room during those slower times.

Edward P. earned slightly over the minimum wage, the same starting wage as other employees. A job coach was with Edward most of his shift at the start of the study period, but she seldom interacted with him or remained in close proximity. She complained that Edward would not listen to her and worked especially poorly in her presence. Her job coaching consisted of giving brief instructions and then watching from either the far end of the dining room or from her car, parked where she could see in the window. By the end of the observation period, the job coach was only on site for about a half-hour at the beginning of each shift.

## Dishwashing at the Clinton Inn Restaurant

Mr. Timothy M. was employed as a dishwasher at the Clinton Inn. He vacuumed, swept and mopped the restaurant floor and cleaned the bathrooms in the morning, then worked in the dishwashing area during the lunch period. Usually the manager and the chef were on duty when Timothy arrived at 8:00 a.m. Two waitresses, a hostess, and a food preparation person arrived later in the morning to begin setting up for lunch. Timothy was paid the minimum wage.

The cook and food preparation person worked together to set up the salad bar, the buffet table, and table settings. The waitresses took a break when the set-up was complete, changed into their dress shoes, and waited until the first customers arrived. Timothy switched from cleaning to dishwashing at this point. Kitchen workers took another break around 3:00 p.m.--waitresses and hostess together at a booth, the cook and food preparation person together in the kitchen--and usually ate food that had not been served for lunch. Timothy was driven to his bus stop by the restaurant manager to catch a bus home at 3:00 p.m.

A job coach from Placement Services had completed on-site training about a month prior to the start of participant-observation at the Clinton Inn. This job coach kept in contact with the manager through telephone calls and an occasional brief visit to "check on things." He had left a book of photographs that depicted each of Timothy's work tasks in chronological order, and this book along with the job coach's phone number were kept in a safe place by the manager in case they were needed.

## Food Preparation at City Hospital

In the dietary department at City Hospital, Mr. Robert L. was responsible for peeling and cutting vegetables during the first part of each workday morning, and then assisting with breakfast dishwashing by wiping empty carts then hand-washing dishes and cups that the dish machine did not clean sufficiently. When the breakfast dishwashing was complete Robert brought carts of clean trays back to the serving area. For the last half-hour of the morning, he returned to peeling and cutting vegetables.

Robert L. worked half-days, and was the only worker in the department who did so. He had not been hired to fill a pre-established job position. Rather, Community Services had negotiated with the hospital to combine several tasks into a new position for him. Nor was Robert an employee of the hospital. Community Services had entered into a contract with City Hospital, whereby the hospital paid a monthly fee to Community Services and Community Services remained Robert's employer. This arrangement allowed the department head more flexibility in creating a non-traditional position, and it also allowed Robert to be paid below the minimum wage, since Community Services held a work activity license which permitted it to pay subminimum wages based on measured productivity. Robert's wage was about $2.00 per hour.

The dietary department was divided into an upper cooking and serving level and a lower level which included a dishroom, a small sink area, a storage room, and a supervisor's office. The dishroom was dominated by a large dish machine which cleaned trays, cups, and utensils after each meal. The sink area was intended to be used for dishwashing whenever the dish machine was not in working order, but it was also used by Robert L. to cut and peel vegetables, a task which ordinarily would be done on the upper level. In the stock room, two workers shelved incoming supplies, kept inventory, and filled requests for supplies that were needed for meals. A supervisor was assigned to the lower level, and one room was officially her office but unofficially it was used as a break room for all staff.

Four or five dishroom workers started work an hour after Robert L. to operate the dish machine when food trays were brought down after breakfast. When the dish machine was on, the dishroom was noisy and all employees were extremely busy. After this peak period, workers cleaned the machine and the dishroom and then took their breaks. Most dishroom workers left the hospital grounds during their breaks. The dishwashing cycle repeated at lunch for dishroom workers except Robert, who left to eat lunch in the hospital cafeteria just as the other workers were returning from their breaks, and then took a city bus to his after day treatment program.

City Hospital had the lowest employee turnover of the settings studied. Four workers had been employed for more than two years. Greater stability may have resulted from the fact that City Hospital's wages and benefits were higher than those at the other settings studied. In addition the work supervisor showed a great deal of concern for her staff and was respected by her subordinates. Still, most dishroom workers sought to distance themselves from identification with their jobs. One worker stated "I'm just doing this until something comes up." Two signs on the wall of the break room reflected in a humorous way the general attitude of dishroom workers towards their occupational status: "Mental Ward" and "Slave Quarters."

Community Services' job coach was with Robert L. for about the first half-hour of each day at the beginning of the study period. But after some complaints were made to the department head about Robert's conduct in the cafeteria and at the bus stop, the job coach began returning to the setting at the end of the shift as well.

### Janitorial Work at Holy Rosary School

Mr. James W. had been employed as the school janitor for two months, earning the minimum wage, when participant-observation began. He cleaned the cafeteria, bathrooms, gym, and the art and music classrooms each afternoon following the students' lunch period. All these rooms were located on the lower level of the school.

The school principal, who worked in the front office upstairs, acted as James W.'s supervisor. No other employees worked with James or worked the same schedule, although various staff members also occupied the setting at various times. A maintenance person was at the school one day per week. Three cafeteria workers served lunch and then cleaned the kitchen while James cleaned the cafeteria. The music teacher, art teacher, gym teacher and the basketball coach also utilized the lower level periodically during the afternoon. A teacher who supervised the student lunch period was in the cafeteria at the beginning of James W.'s shift, but she and the students went back upstairs as soon as lunch period was over. Three other janitors were employed to clean the rest of the school, but they worked evenings and James never saw them.

A job coach from Placement Services was with James W. during his entire time at the site at the beginning of the study period. Four months later, the job coach usually arrived late or left the site briefly. This job coach was the second one James W. had been assigned. The first job coach had left for a new job. The second job coach credited the first job coach with having taught "basic skills," while he himself was working on "refinements."

# CHAPTER IV

# SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The work settings studied were rich in social interactions. It was unusual for any employee to work for more than a few minutes without interacting with another person. This section describes the social interactions among co-workers, between co-workers and supervisors, and between supported employees and their co-workers and supervisors. Interactions between job coaches and company employees will be considered in Chapter V as aspects of job support.

## Interactions Among Co-workers

Interactions directly necessary for the performance of a job (such as a waitress giving food orders to the chef) can be considered formal interactions. Informal interactions are those that have a purely social purpose.

### Formal Interactions

Two or more job positions were often interdependent, so that co-workers had to interact to jointly accomplish a task. At Grants, incoming stock was loaded onto a conveyor by one worker, the stock number was called out by a second worker and was checked off a list by a third worker, and the carton was lifted from the conveyor onto a pallet by a fourth worker. Job positions also intersected one another at various points during the day.

Interactions were required for the City Hospital dietary workers to obtain items from storeroom workers, for the Clinton Inn's food preparation person to prepare the correct food items for the cook, for Ride-A-Van drivers to receive instructions for their next run, and so forth. Joint or intersecting tasks, between two people or among a larger group, were a part of most co-workers' job responsibilities.

Even when job tasks did not have to be performed jointly, workers often worked on them jointly or in close proximity to one another, as if they did. For example, if two workers had to each mark stock in Grants' storeroom for part of the day, they chose the same part of the day and opened adjacent cartons. Likewise, two housekeepers jointly cleaned each room at Sunny Haven, and two waitresses jointly set up the Clinton Inn salad bar. Co-workers worked jointly on tasks whenever possible, even when it was not an efficient way to get the job done.

Interactions were an essential part of any joint task. For example, the housekeeper who was dusting had to negotiate with the housekeeper who was mopping to determine where to move the furniture in the room, where to end up, and so forth. Each had to time her movements to coordinate with those of the other.

Most job positions were to some degree indefinite, incomplete, or contained problematic boundaries. These "rough edges" of job tasks were straightened out through interactions among co-workers. A dishroom worker at City Hospital who noticed that a tray unloaded from the dish machine had not come out clean could either walk to the nearby sink and give it to the person assigned to re-wash such items or call that person to come and get the tray. And both workers could either use an item-by-item approach to rewashing or wait until several items could be brought to the sink together. Each pair of workers negotiated a smooth working relationship (Gabarro, 1987).

Out-of-the-ordinary occurrences were among the most common "rough edges" of jobs, and they caused disruptions in planned routines that had to be resolved. If one worker was out sick, the remaining workers had to divide up the day's work differently; if a key wasn't where it was supposed to be, workers had to ask around for it; if a special group had a lunch reservation, the seating and buffet tables had to be rearranged; if a machine wasn't working properly, the maintenance department had to be notified. Breaks in routine were far from unusual. One worker explained that "no two days are ever alike." Worker job descriptions functioned as ideal types or theoretical models. Each actual work day deviated in several respects from the ideal, and the discrepancy was overcome through interactions. This type of formal interaction was particularly common at the start of a work shift and at transitional periods between tasks.

### Informal interactions

During work, workers in close proximity to another or workers carrying out joint or intersecting tasks often talked informally as they worked. These interactions tended to be brief comments, sometimes interspersed with formal interactions. On one occasion, two waitresses alternated between discussing how to divide up a short supply of sugar among all the tables and discussing child care options.

Formal interactions had a way of spilling over into informal interactions. For example, when obtaining supplies from the City Hospital store room, food service workers stayed a few extra minutes to talk with the stock workers. One tired Clinton Inn waitress called in an order to the chef for "a quiche and a back massage," and the chef told the waitress a massage parlor story as she dished out the quiche.

Unplanned occurrences, including mistakes, stimulated informal interactions and any spill, slip or other mistake was inevitably commented on by someone. The worker calling out stock numbers at the Grants warehouse misread one number, and a co-worker teased back with "When a number is shaped like that it's a seven, not a four." Surprises, like a worm in the salad greens, sparked a great deal of laughter and joking.

Joking and teasing were perhaps the most common informal interactions during work. At Ride-A-Van, several workers were called by nicknames as a form of teasing. "Standing jokes" were part of the culture of several work settings. For example, one City Hospital worker was routinely teased about her loud voice.

Many informal interactions were in the form of humorous comments. To a worker who remarked "I think I got it right this time," a co-worker responded "That would be the first time;" to a ✓ worker looking at his paycheck, a co-worker remarked "What do you need money for? You have millions;" to a worker who had arrived ✓ late, a co-worker's greeting was "You're in big trouble."

Another common type of co-worker interactions involved complaining. Supervisors and company managers were the main subject of co-worker complaining. Inconsistency and other managerial irrationality, being overly cost-conscious (i.e., "cheap"), disrespectful treatment, and expecting too much work, were common

Topics of conversation varied enormously. Homes or apartments, yards, pets, spouses and families, sex, mutual acquaintances, restaurants, music, and a variety of other topics were discussed. Topic areas could be roughly divided into shared enjoyments and shared problems and responsibilities. Co-workers conducted a type of exploratory conversation with a new worker to ascertain whether the two of them had interests, experiences, or acquaintances in common and further social exchanges grew out of any evident commonalities.

Most workers identified one or two co-workers as those they knew and liked best. These "work friends" (Henderson & Argyle, 1985) commonly talked together during slow times and non-work times.

Work friends tended to be (a) co-workers who started their jobs together, (b) co-workers who knew each other before starting their jobs, or (c) co-workers who had been paired so that an experienced worker provided training to a new worker. Most often, work friends were of the same sex and held similar job positions, and had interests in common. For example, one worker at Jiffy Burger was the friend of a co-worker who belonged to the same church. Occasionally, a worker also identified a co-worker who was especially disliked or avoided.

Informal socializing was an important aspect of work at the settings studied. Workers at several settings reported that "We have fun here." Having fun meant including numerous informal interactions into an otherwise monotonous work day, and not taking low-status jobs too seriously. As one dishroom worker admitted, "We're just screwing around for the most part."

Workers did not commonly discuss or plan non-work social themes.

Each setting possessed a distinct temporal rhythm. During peak or rush periods informal interactions diminished and during off-peak or slower periods they picked up again. Informal interactions also tended to be centered around certain social places within a work environment. One particular booth at the Clinton Inn was utilized by waitresses to talk for a few minutes between setting up and the arrival of customers. At City Hospital, the area in front of the elevator was a favorite social space, because the elevators were slow and two or more people were often waiting to get to the next level. The supervisor's office had also been commandeered as a break room. Sundstrom (1986) referred to such social spaces as "gathering places."

Break times, lunch times, and the periods at the beginning and end of work shifts provided opportunities for longer, more conversational social interactions among workers. Workers could exercise more choice regarding whom to interact with during these non-work times. At Grants all full-time employees ate lunch together, but there were several tables in the lunch room and subgroups of co-workers sat together. City Hospital workers left the grounds for lunch in pairs or threesomes. Each setting had its break and lunch traditions, including customs for procuring food and drink. At City Hospital, one worker was designated to make coffee in a pot on the supervisor's desk, using supplies semi-officially removed from the storage shelves. At Ride-A-Van, it was customary for a worker to bring in a box of donuts each Friday to share among workers. Workers took turns bringing in donuts.

activities with co-workers, nor did most workers report spending leisure time with co-workers. As one worker put it, "I see these people all day. Why would I want to go out with them after work?" However, there were exceptions. Sometimes co-workers made plans to do something together on their days off, and in a few cases co-workers dated each other. These relationships were kept fairly private and separate from working relationships.

## Interactions Between Workers and Supervisors

Supervisors spent much of their time in offices or tending to matters that were not in the immediate vicinity of their subordinates. Their involvement with workers at work settings was therefore episodic rather than continual and focused on specific problems and issues. As compared with interactions among co-workers, interactions between workers and supervisors were more often formal.

Informal interactions between workers and supervisors tended to be brief exchanges or comments, such as asking how one's weekend had been. As with co-worker informal interactions, these were often stimulated by formal interactions and were often humorous.

## Interactions Between Supported Employees and Co-Workers or Supervisors

Both formal and informal interactions occurred between supported employees and their co-workers and supervisors at each setting.

### Formal Interactions with Co-workers

As was the case with interactions among workers in general, formal interactions between a co-worker and a supported employee involved the negotiation of task "rough edges" and the solution of unusual problems. As an example James W. asked the gym teacher each day whether basketball practice was scheduled for later, so he could plan when to clean the locker room. Many interactions of this nature arose because of the fact that cleaning seemed to get in the way of other work activity.

Unplanned breaks in routine stimulated interactions as well. For example, sometimes the food preparation person or a waitress at the Clinton Inn needed a particular item cleaned right away, out of its usual sequence, and he or she asked Timothy M. for it.

Joint and intersecting tasks, such as cleaning of City Hospital carts, also required interaction. The worker removing trays from the carts called over to Robert L. each time another cart was empty.

Because they tended to have more isolated, "one-person" job positions, supported employees had fewer opportunities for formal interactions than did their co-workers. Supported jobs had also been carefully designed to be unusually routine; that is, many "rough edges" had been removed by means of a very thorough and detailed job description. Those rough edges that did remain to be negotiated were often the result of interference between the cleaning work of the supported employee and other work rather than mutual interdependence of functions.

### Informal Interactions with Co-workers

Patterns of informal interactions paralleled those among co-workers in general. Short exchanges occurred throughout the work day, often as a "spill-over" from formal interactions. Informal interactions commonly involved teasing or joking. For example, a pet dog was cared for by the Sunny Haven staff, and whenever the dog was lying in someone's path, Brenda P. was jokingly accused of having told the dog to lie there.

Supported employees participated in longer informal interactions, such as discussions of movies, restaurants, preferred activities, and mutual acquaintances during break and other non-work times. But their participation was often peripheral. For example, after making a point to a co-worker, one worker turned to the supported employee and asked "Right?" Supported employees had difficulty participating in discussions partly because their life experiences were more restricted. One supported employee joined a conversation about favorite restaurants by saying "I go to McDonald's." Although this statement probably accurately reflected the employee's restaurant experience, it was treated as a silly comment and resulted in exclusion from the rest of the discussion.

The frequency of informal interactions between supported employees and their co-workers differed widely across settings. At Sunny Haven, Grants, and Jiffy Burger the amount of informal interaction was minimal. Because their jobs were somewhat isolated, supported employees had fewer opportunities for formal interactions to spill over into informal interaction. For example, Edward P. spent almost all of his work day in the dining area at Jiffy Burger, while his co-workers worked behind the counter. And the break times of supported employees at these settings did not coincide with those of their co-workers, primarily because the supported employees were employed only part time.

The other four work settings were much richer in informal interactions. Work tasks at these settings were more interdependent and supported employees worked in closer physical proximity to co-workers. At Ride-A-Van and City Hospital, supported employees shared some breaks or other non-work time with co-workers. Richard F. ate donuts with his co-workers on Fridays, an important custom at that setting. One Friday he took a turn bringing donuts for the group. At the Clinton Inn and Holy Rosary School, the physical proximity of supported employees created some opportunities for informal interactions. The school music teacher, for example, mentioned James W.'s new haircut as she walked past the room he was mopping on her way out.

Limited communication skills were sometimes mentioned by co-workers as a limiting factor for interactions. At three work settings, co-workers described the supported employee as "quiet," and reported some disappointing communication attempts. As one co-worker put it, "I tried to start a conversation with (Linda F.), but all she would say was 'yes' or 'no'." At both City Hospital and Sunny Haven co-workers had difficulty in understanding the speech of the supported employee. But the relationship between speech skills and interactions was inconsistent. At Jiffy Burger, where minimal interactions occurred, the supported employee was not a particularly quiet individual and his speech was easy to understand. Conversely, some of the richest informal interaction occurred at City Hospital, with the supported employee whose speech was the most difficult to understand. Nevertheless, supported employees who initiated informal interactions and extended them past one exchange did achieve a higher level of interactions than might have otherwise taken place. It is also possible that, at least during busy times, some supported employees were perceived as quiet because they had to concentrate carefully on the task being performed in order to keep up.

Occasionally communication problems occurred, but these were in connection with formal interactions. Robert L. pointed to his watch on one occasion in an attempt to ask a co-worker if it was about time for the dish machine to start up, but the co-worker assumed he was asking whether it would harm the watch it if got wet. But because informal interaction was primarily social rather than goal-directed, co-workers were able to find numerous ways of interacting informally that did not rely on accurate understanding of speech. One solution was the use of gestural communication like the trading of "slap me five" handshakes or slapstick-style jokes. Another solution was to provide responses that were independent of speech content. For example, a co-worker asked the supported employee what he was going to do that weekend. When the supported employee's reply was not intelligible, the co-worker responded "Whatever you say, Boss." Some co-workers at both Sunny Haven and City Hospital developed a monologue style of conversation with the supported employee at that setting, which required only a minimal amount of participation on the supported employee's part.

### Interaction with Supervisors

Formal and informal interactions between supported employees and their supervisors also paralleled those between co-workers and their supervisors. However, supervisors at many settings came closer than any other person--except job coaches discussed in the following section--to filling the role of a work friend for supported employees.

Supervisors made friendly comments or asked social questions in the context of giving instructions or checking on work. Supervisors seemed to know the supported employees best because the job had been initially developed for the supported employee through the supervisor, and also because the supervisor communicated periodically with agency staff about the supported employee. But supervisors were busy in other parts of the setting with other duties most of the time, and therefore were not the most satisfactory choices for work friends. And at Jiffy Burger the supervisor on any given day might be any one of three assistant managers, who did not know the supported employee well. A brief "How's it going?" from the supervisor was the extent of informal interaction for some supported employees with their supervisors in an entire work shift.

# CHAPTER V

# JOB SUPPORTS

Supports from a variety of sources were a common feature of work settings. Some were company-sponsored, to help insure that workers were well-trained, satisfied, and productive. Others were unofficial supports provided by co-workers and supervisors. In addition to these internal, or natural supports, support services were provided to supported employees by job coaches.

## Company-Sponsored Supports

Both supervision and training were provided to employees at each setting and a variety of other supports were sponsored by individual companies. These mechanisms were primarily for the companies' benefit, but they were indispensable sources of information and feedback to employees, and therefore served as job supports as well.

### Supervision of Workers

Supervisory intervention consisted primarily of: (a) spot-checking work for quality or efficiency; (b) rescheduling or reassigning work in response to special problems; (c) providing reminders to workers to attend to infrequent job responsibilities, such as completing weekly paperwork or periodically cleaning a piece of equipment; (d) responding to requests for help or information; and (e) praising or reprimanding workers for specific aspects of their job performance. Most supervisory interventions were sporadic and unsystematic. For example, supervisors spot-checked work while walking through a work area on their way to do something else.

Supervisors did not usually remind workers to perform daily tasks, although there were exceptions. The manager at Jiffy Burger specifically gave workers permission to take their break each day, in pairs, and then reminded them to return to work a few minutes later. Because their assistance was largely sporadic, supervisors expected employees to seek them out when in need of help.

Supported employees received support from supervisors as did their co-workers. For example, the Jiffy Burger manager used verbal and gestural prompts to instruct Edward P. to look for spills on the dining room floor and to interrupt his other work to clean spills quickly, and the Clinton Inn manager noticed that the brass handrails were not being adequately cleaned and reminded Timothy M. to wipe them more thoroughly. But supervision of supported employees differed in two ways from supervision of co-workers. First, supported employees were seldom reassigned or rescheduled. Supervisors believed that changes in routine would be too confusing for supported employees. One supervisor stated, "As long as we don't mess with his routine he's fine." Supervisors also felt that since the supported employment agency had been a party to negotiations over job responsibilities, these responsibilities could not be changed unilaterally.

Second, it was more common for supervisors to give reminders to supported employees about daily work tasks. Some supervisors reported that this made supervising supported employees more time consuming than supervising other employees. As one supervisor put it:

> (Robert L.) is more trouble for me because I always have to keep

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> an eye on him. If I don't see him where he is supposed to be I have to go looking. Like one day, he was out on the loading docks watching them unload the trucks. He could get hurt out there.

Supervisory responsibility for two of the supported employees was unclear. At Sunny Haven, the administrator alternated between claiming that the job coach, then the head housekeeper, and then she herself was Brenda P.'s supervisor. At Holy Rosary School, the principal stated that she herself supervised James W., but the job coach stated that the parish maintenance person was his supervisor. She believed that he was being taught "a set pattern to follow in his work," and would require very little if any supervision other than job coaching.

### Co-worker Mentors

A second form of company-sponsored support was pairing a new worker with an experienced worker. Workers referred to being "put with" or "going around with" someone or being "in training." For a few days, the new worker and his or her mentor performed one job together, and the mentor taught the job to the new worker. Thereafter, the mentor remained available to answer questions or provide periodic assistance. Most workers reported that they had learned their jobs primarily from a mentor and secondarily by asking any available person for help.

Specially negotiated and one-person job positions mitigated against the use of a mentor for supported employees. More significantly, provision of an agency job coach for training had been a selling point in job development for supported employment and company employees understood that they were not expected to be involved in supported employee training.

### Other Company Supports

Individual companies sponsored a variety of other supports for employees. These included a quality control specialist to check work quality, training videotapes, weekly employee meetings, bonus programs to boost productivity, and company parties and outings. All of these supports were utilized by supported employees.

## Unofficial Supports from Co-workers and Supervisors

In addition to company-sponsored mechanisms, co-workers and supervisors provided support unofficially. Supported employees both gave and received unofficial support.

### Unofficial Co-worker Supports

Co-worker assistance was a standing pattern of behavior at work settings. Co-workers helped one another lift a heavy carton, move something out of the way, look for a lost item, and so forth. Co-workers modified their work pace or routine to accommodate one another. For example, whenever the hostess at the Clinton Inn was more than a few minutes late, the waitresses started her work and postponed their own break.

Co-workers reminded each other about work tasks and pointed out mistakes that might get each other in trouble later. Co-workers sometimes switched assignments among themselves, to avoid doing tasks they disliked or did poorly.

Co-workers, and especially mentors, instructed new employees about informal customs and tricks of the trade. For example, as one new worker brought empty carts down to the City Hospital dishroom, in careful obedience to his job description, an experienced dishroom worker explained to him that "You don't have to do that. Nobody else does." And at Jiffy Burger, company policy dictated that only one employee had a key to the supply closet, but each new worker was unofficially lent a key by his or her mentor and told to have it duplicated. An instruction common to several work settings was "take your time."

Co-worker support extended beyond work tasks. Co-workers gave each other rides to and from work, and in one case a worker even called a co-worker's home to wake him up in the morning. Co-workers listened to each other's personal problems and offered advice, about work and non-work personal relationships, and also about such practical matters as car repair, finding an apartment, obtaining child care, financial advice and debt counseling, and health and medical matters.

Work friends acted as allies for one another, defending one another against accusations or teasing, and covering for one another's mistakes. The relationship between two co-workers was described by their supervisor in this way: "When one is off, all the other one does is bitch about them. Yet if you criticize either one they stick together like brothers." Mentors used their influence to buffer criticism, resolve conflicts, or interpret events for a co-worker. When one Ride-A-Van driver was involved in a minor vehicle accident, her supervisor led her to believe that the incident was gravely serious and nearly unforgivable. Her mentor related stories of past accidents of greater seriousness, helped the driver fill out the accident report form, and assured her that the supervisor's bark was worse than his bite.

Co-workers provided unofficial support to supported employees, to demonstrate work tasks, give reminders, and cover for mistakes. At the Clinton Inn, Timothy M. sometimes placed an empty coffee pot onto the heating element. The waitresses watched out for this and always took the pot off before it burned. City Hospital stock room workers dependably notified Robert L. when his shift ended, since he had difficulty telling time.

But the absence of co-worker mentors as allies caused problems for supported employees in subtle ways. Perhaps the most extreme example occurred during spring cleaning at Sunny Haven. A cleaner hired as temporary worked with the head housekeeper as her mentor, while Brenda P. worked with her job coach. When spring cleaning was over and one position had to be eliminated, it was the employee without an ally who was let go.

Supported employees were providers as well as recipients of unofficial support. At City Hospital, Robert L. removed carts when they were carelessly left in front of the elevator by another worker. Richard F. was usually aware of which Ride-A-Van drivers were on the premises and consequently he was asked whenever someone wanted to know quickly whether a particular person was around. At Holy Rosary School, James W. kept the gym door open until the last student left the locker room, then went over and closed it for the gym teacher.

### Unofficial Supervisor Support

All supervisors gave a type of passive support to workers by overlooking or working around an occasional "bad day" or a particular deficit. One supervisor was careful to make work assignments in such a way that two workers who could not get along were never working together. Another supervisor recognized that workers had child care problems and was lenient about punctuality. He explained, "If I fired everyone who didn't show up for work I wouldn't have any workers."

A more active form of support was shown by some individual supervisors. The most striking example was the supervisor of City Hospital's dishroom. This supervisor encouraged employees to share their personal problems with her and dealt with issues of dieting, dating, in-law relationships, and medical care. She visited one employee hospitalized for an accident to assure the employee that his job was being held open for his return.

Unofficial support by supervisors towards supported employees was also evident. The supervisor at Ride-A-Van modified Richard F.'s duties temporarily when he had sprained a wrist and reminded him on several occasions not to use his wrist. When Robert L. occasionally refused to work at City Hospital, he was provided a place to sit and allowed to remain at the work site, without pay, for the rest of the shift. Supervisors also came to the defense of supported employees when they were criticized or teased. When several nurses complained about the behavior of Robert L. in the City Hospital cafeteria, the supervisor sided with Robert and used her influence to defuse the situation.

Unofficial support was not experienced as a burden. As one supervisor put it, "If someone needs a little help, that's why I'm here. I enjoy it." But there were some limits on its effectiveness for supported employees. Supervisors were not consistently aware of a supported employee's need for assistance, and not all supported employees asked for help when they experienced a problem. And communication difficulties sometimes arose when they did ask. On one occasion a supported employee tried to explain that he had forgotten to bring his lunch, but neither the supervisor nor a co-worker were able to understand his speech.

## External Agency Support

A job coach was assigned to each supported employee, and visited every setting regularly except the Clinton Inn, where most contacts were by telephone. Job coaching and, occasionally, job accommodations negotiated between the employer and other agency personnel functioned as external supports for supported employees.

### Job Coaching

Initial job coach training had been completed, and job coaches described their work as "working on the fine points" or as "checking on" the supported employee. They divided their time between interacting directly with the supported employee, observing his or her behavior at the setting without interacting, and interacting with co-workers or supervisors.

At Sunny Haven and Holy Rosary School, job coaches spent a great deal of time accompanying the employee, checking his or her work, and providing prompts or feedback about each task. The most frequent prompts were reminders not to "miss things," and time management prompts such as requests to hurry up or to begin a new task at a certain time. These job coaches functioned as the supervisors of the supported employees and were thought of as their supervisors. But they also functioned as their co-workers. For example, the supported employee and job coach would each lift an end of a table to move it, just as co-workers often worked together in pairs.

At the other settings job coaches visited periodically. On a typical visit a job coach observed the supported employee's work, answered any questions, and offered a few suggestions or conducted a brief instruction session. Job coaches also met with the supervisor, and if any problems were brought to their attention, job coaches discussed the problem with the supported employee.

For job coaches, the work of the supported employee was defined as the sequence of tasks listed on a task checklist and/or depicted in a sequence of photographs. For example, when the job coach arrived at Sunny Haven, he expected Brenda P. to be at the correct task on that day's picture booklet. This led to some difficulties because each day's work requirements did not always match pre-established task lists exactly. For example, at one point construction work at Sunny Haven necessitated a change in the cleaning sequence, but Brenda P.'s job coach "corrected" her when she arrived and insisted that she return to her old routine, resulting in considerable confusion.

Informal interactions, because they were not part of the task routine, tended to be either ignored or discouraged by job coaches. Richard F.'s job coach showed no interest in the fact that he took a turn bringing in donuts for his co-workers. This same job coach was also surprised to find that the supervisor had evaluated Richard's participation in joking and teasing as a positive attribute, since the job coach herself had been attempting to extinguish it. She only changed her mind after receiving repeated assurances from the supervisor.

A major function of job coaches was to rescue supported employees when a problem arose. If her spray bottle was empty, Brenda P. handed it to her job coach and the job coach found out where to obtain another bottle. If Richard F. completed all of his work tasks and still had time left in his day, he reported to his job coach and she gave him some further assignments.

Job coaching was conducted quietly and privately. Neither supervisors nor co-workers were aware of what job coaches were doing. One agency's training manual cautioned job coaches to "use appropriate voice level (low) on job sites, so that co-workers hear as little of the instruction process as possible." Job coaches were particularly intent on hiding negative supported employee behavior and disciplinary interactions from company personnel, in the belief that supported employees would be in danger of losing their jobs if these were observed.

One goal of job coaches was to visit less often and for shorter time periods. These fading decisions were based on a job coach's decision that the supported employee was able to accomplish his or her work without assistance, the job coaching needs of other supported employees for whom they were responsible, and agency funding considerations. But fading did not always take place as planned. At two settings the level of job coach presence increased over the participant-observation period.

Job coach fading could be stressful for supported employees and for company co-workers and supervisors. At Jiffy Burger, co-workers and supervisors were confused on the first day that the job coach did not visit. At Holy Rosary School, the supported employee was upset the first time that his job coach was not present at the start of the shift and requested that the researcher act as his job coach. On each of these occasions, neither the company nor the supported employee was informed that the job coach would not be present. One agency administrator explained that this was a deliberate policy of her agency: "If we told them we were withdrawing, then it wouldn't be natural."

Job coach supports outside of the work setting dealt primarily with teaching supported employees to ride the bus. Job coaches were not involved in other aspects of supported employee's life and did not know them well. One job coach attended a meeting at a supported employee's residence, but attendance at such a meeting was described as an extraordinary event.

Job coaches also interacted with supervisors and co-workers at each work setting. Where job coach visits were less frequent, contact with supervisors was one of the main purposes of each visit. One job coach in particular spent most of her time at the work setting talking with the supervisor. Job coaches discussed supported employee job performance and problems with supervisors as well as any changes in routine or schedule.

With co-workers, job coaches exchanged informal social comments as a part of their visits. Job coaches also acted as middlepersons for interactions between co-workers and supported employees, relaying instructions or requests back and forth. A third type of interaction with co-workers consisted of explanations of the limitations and disabilities of supported employees. One job coach related an example of this type of interaction:

> The music teacher was trying to explain (to the supported employee) that she wanted five rows of six chairs. She couldn't understand why he couldn't get that concept. I took her aside after he left and told her "He knows five and he knows six, but he can't put the two together."

### Job Accommodations

A second type of agency support involved the negotiation of job accommodations on behalf of supported employees. Work tasks at two work settings, and the work schedule at two others, were adapted specifically for the needs of the supported employees. And at the Clinton Inn, arrangements were made for Timothy M.'s supervisor to drive him from and to his bus stop each day.

Picture booklets were developed for use by supported employees at two settings and the job coach developed a color-coding system for Brenda P.'s time card. This system was designed to assist Brenda P. to punch in on the correct day and to identify the correct picture booklet for that day's work.

Adaptations were developed by job coaches to solve specific training problems. These included an alarm watch to signal break time, twist-ties for closing plastic bags, and a box set aside for a return bus token.

Some job accommodations had the effect of decreasing the amount of natural support available to a supported employee. For example, the Jiffy Burger supervisor called out each worker's break time except Edward P., who used his watch alarm to signal break time. And as we have seen, special schedules and job structures significantly decreased interactions with co-workers.

# CHAPTER VI

# PERCEPTIONS

Four social roles were available at the work settings studied and the perceptions of setting participants towards one another depended to a large extent on which social role they occupied. Because of the essentially hierarchical nature of work organizations, employees and supervisors formed two natural distinct social roles. The role of job coach was distinct as well. Supported employees and their co-workers belonged in a sense to a single group: non-supervisory employees. However, one individual was clearly identified as the supported employee at each setting and this identification influenced the way that individual was perceived by others. This chapter reports the perceptions of supported employees, co-workers, supervisors, and job coaches.

## Supported Employee Perceptions

All of the supported employees stated that they like their jobs, and six out of seven liked their supported job better than their previous work or day activity, or (in the case of part-time employees) better than their other day program. The seventh supported employees stated that if he had a choice, he would rather return to his previous job in a sheltered workshop, but he added "I like it here too, though." This individual had difficulty in explaining why he liked the workshop better, but statements at other times indicated that leaving the workshop had brought to an abrupt end some long-term and important friendships, and this was the source of his dissatisfaction.

All of the supported employees like their co-workers and many named specific work friends, co-workers with whom they shared social conversation or participated in teasing, joking, and slapstick-type pranks. One notable exception was Linda F., who participated in few co-worker interactions at Grants and seemed to feel lonely at work. Loneliness was apparent from her facial expression, her frustration when unable to help obtain help with a problem, and her joyful reaction to visits from her job coach and from the researcher.

Supported employees expressed a particular liking and respect for their supervisors. The sentiment of one supervisor that the supported employee "would do anything for me" was generally shared by all of the supervisors. In one instance this commitment was so strong that when the supervisor took a vacation, the supported employee was very reluctant to obey a substitute supervisor, a story that was related with pride by the primary supervisor.

Supported employees believed that they needed a job coach and that they liked their job coach. However they varied in their responses to the actual process of job coaching. Linda F., Richard F., and Robert L. enjoyed job coach visits, and asked them for assistance with any problems or unusual events encountered since the last visit. However, they wanted to obtain their daily job instructions and performance feedback from their supervisor, not from the job coach. On the other hand, Edward P. disliked being observed and corrected by his job coach so much that he sometimes deliberately moved to an area that made observation by his job coach more difficult. At Sunny Haven and Holy Rosary School, job coaches were present most of the time and Brenda P. and James W. perceived them as supervisors and counted on their ongoing assistance. Timothy M. had minimal contact with his job coach.

## Co-worker Perceptions

### Co-worker Perception of Supported Employees

Supported employees were generally described as good workers, who "know what to do" and "work right along." One co-worker's job had been made less difficult when some tasks were given to the supported employee and stated that "I don't know what I'd do without her." Another co-worker described a supported employee in this way:

> He's so proud of every new thing he learns. You should have been here the first day he took the bus by himself. He would never hurt anybody. It's too bad more people don't have his gentle way.

Other co-worker perceptions were of individual supported employee characteristics. For example, co-workers at one setting described the supported employee at the setting as "very quiet," while another was described as "very verbal."

Co-workers did not name supported employees as among their work friends, as supported employees had done with them. But they felt that supported employees were in every sense their fellow workers. Co-workers commonly report being "comfortable" with the supported employee and viewing him or her as "part of the group." The only difficulty co-workers mentioned was the need to "tell them everything" or "hand things right to him"; i.e., to give more specific and concrete instructions to supported employees than co-workers were used to giving. Co-workers readily included supported employees in group conversations at break time and in other group social activities. For example, a co-worker drove Richard F. to a company-sponsored pool party.

When asked, co-workers stated that they did not perceive the supported employee as handicapped or different from any other employee. However, it was clear to some extent at least they did classify supported employees as members of a different group. One co-worker's statement revealed this ambiguity:

> I treat him just like anyone else. If I have something to say I say it. If you treat them special their mentality will never improve. That's how we treat my cousin Frankee, too.

Some co-workers used adjectives like "sweet" or "cute" when describing supported employees, or gave other indications that they may have perceived them as more childlike than other employees. Co-workers at three settings reported that they sometimes gave what they referred to as "extra treats" to the supported employee.

It is interesting that co-workers described work problems of supported employees in the same way as work problems of other employees, not in terms of a disability. Several co-workers believed that Richard F. sometimes "acts like he can't do anything" or "makes believe he's lost" in order to shirk responsibility, whereas his job coach believed that he forgot tasks because he had suffered a traumatic brain injury. Co-workers at another setting related an incident in which the supported employee had swung a broom at a co-worker. The explanation for his behavior was that "He really hates John." These co-workers disliked John too and believed that the correct solution to the problem was for John to stay away from the supported employee. Such explanations--laziness, likes and dislikes, bad days, and so on--were the same sorts of explanations given for the work problems of non-disabled workers. A sense of solidarity was encouraged among workers, which included an acceptance of imperfection. As one co-worker expressed it, "Sure, we have to put up with (the supported employee). But he has to put up with us too." One difference sometimes attributed to supported employees was that perhaps their bad days were a little more extreme than other workers', or that they had less sophisticated means of expressing likes and dislikes.

A number of co-workers reported that their original perceptions of the supported employee had been revised in a positive direction over time. Statements like "He has a lot of ability; he surprised me" and "He's smarter than a lot of people think" were made by co-workers at four settings. It might be accurate to say that co-workers' perception of supported employees as disabled tended to become less vivid, or encompass a smaller part of their total perception of supported employees over time.

### Co-worker Perceptions of Job Coaches

Co-workers viewed job coaches as possessing a special expertise in communicating with and teaching supported employees. When job coaches were on-site, co-workers usually gave explanations and directions to them rather than to supported employees, in the belief that job coaches had special techniques for relaying these explanations and instructions to supported employees. Job coaching activity was described somewhat vaguely, even mysteriously, as "working with" supported employees or as "dealing with" problems. Co-workers believed that the routines established and decisions made by job coaches should not be altered because job coaches had good reasons for what they did, reasons understandable only to other experts. For example, co-workers at Grants did not allow the supported employee to use a box cutter to open cartons because the job coach had told them it would be too dangerous.

Possibly because job coaches were no longer continually providing training, co-workers perceived them as largely disciplinarians. For example, when a supported employee experienced a job performance problem, his job coach "got on his case," according to co-workers.

### Co-worker Perceptions of Companies and Supervisors

As we have seen, co-workers tended to express little commitment to their jobs, and many were forthright in reporting that "I'm sick of it," "I've been here long enough," or "I'm just doing this until something comes up." Co-workers also tended to perceive their supervisors negatively. Complaining about supervisors and company policies was a common topic of conversation. Supervisors were seen as "two faced," "not too bright," disrespectful, and inconsistent. This negative perception of supervisors contrasted with the point of view of supported employees, who usually regarded their supervisors as their closest friend and most dependable ally.

A negative perception of supervisors did not apply in all seven settings. The stock room supervisor at Grants was viewed as almost a co-worker. He dressed more like a co-worker than like a company manager and had an egalitarian supervisory style. Negative attitudes were reserved for his supervisors, the store manager and assistant manager. At City Hospital, co-workers referred to the dishroom supervisor jokingly as "Mom," and described her in positive terms.

## Supervisor Perceptions

### Supervisor Perceptions of Supported Employees

Supervisors were generally pleased with supported employees and satisfied with their work. Supported employees were described as "very accurate," "doing fine," and having "a lot of ability." In addition, supervisors felt that supported employees fit in well and had become "part of the place."

Praise for supported employees was qualified by several supervisors who felt that the supported employee at the setting was only satisfactory "in her own little sphere" or "as long as we don't mess with his routine." Lack of flexibility concerned supervisors, and was an important factor in Brenda P.'s termination from Sunny Haven because it meant that she was useful only "in an ideal situation," whereas "this is the real world."

Other problems mentioned by supervisors about individual supported employees were that "We always have to remind him to get back to work," he is "a little more trouble," "He can't take care of quick turnaround," and "He gets overly concerned about things."

But supervisors took these problems in stride, and dealt with them as an expected part of their jobs. In fact, some supervisors not only tolerated problems and crises--including those associated with the management of entry-level employees--but had been drawn to such work and enjoyed it. As one supervisor put it:

> There's always some kind of crisis in the business. But that's what keeps me going. I have a love/hate relationship with it.

When a supervisor reprimanded Richard F. for bringing a knife to work, he was pleased that he had had an opportunity to do him "some good." None of the supervisors except the administrator of Sunny Haven believed that the problems of the supported employee were serious, and in some cases reported that they were less serious than the problems of some of their co-workers. But although supervisors did not expect employees to be free of problems, they did look for the trait of "initiative" and for "signs of improvement" in employees.

### Supervisor Perceptions of Job Coaches and Agencies

Supervisors were pleased with the service that job coaches provided. They felt, as did co-workers, that they were obtaining the benefit of special expertise without which they could not employ the supported employees. They looked to the job coach for cues as to the extent to which they should become involved in training and supervision. One supervisor asked the job coach, "Should I step in or back off? You just let me know."

Supervisors maintained quick access to the job coach's phone number, in case problems should arise. At one setting the job coach's name and phone number could be found on the posted list of employees, instead of the name and number of the supported employee himself. Picture booklets created by job coaches at two settings that depicted the task sequence of the supported employee were kept in an important location and considered valuable by supervisors, even though at one setting the booklet had been rendered obsolete by job changes.

At Sunny Haven, the supervisor believed that the job coach who worked with Brenda P. had been both a help and a hindrance. The following excerpts are from an interview following Brenda's termination:

> I don't know, I never had a job coach here before, and I don't know whether a job coach inhibits her communications with other people. Because she knew he was there. A job coach is good but I think inhibits them. Put yourself in that situation. If you came in at 12:00 and you knew you were going to go home at 3:30, and your job coach was standing at your shoulder, how much initiative would you take to make friends with other staff members or go ahead and assume some responsibility? You wouldn't because you know you're only going to be here a short time, (the job coach) is here. You know everything is going to be alright. Even if I do it wrong, (the job coach) will tell me, not the head housekeeper. She was not accountable to another person except (the job coach). I don't know if it makes sense, but these are my observations over a period of time.

## Job Coach Perceptions

### Job Coach Perceptions of Companies and Job Coaching

Job coaches viewed their job as that of teaching a job routine to a supported employee and insuring that job performance was successful. One agency's Job Coach Training Manual explains the meaning of effective job coaching: "This means that the person you are training needs to be successful in the position that you are training him/her for."

The focus of job coaching was on the specific requirements of each position. These requirements were defined in terms of a pre-established list of job tasks negotiated with the employer. As one job coach put it, "The important thing is the list. He has to learn to go to the list and go back to the task he was on."

Supervisors did not always regard being tied to a set routine as an asset, but as a potential problem. The reverse discrepancy, where supervisors perceived as assets behavior job coaches perceived as errors, occurred as well. The supervisor at one setting related the following incident:

> Richard F. takes his job very seriously. He told everyone to get out of the kitchen because it was time for him to clean. I told him he should let them stay if they wanted to and work around them.

Taking the job seriously was a positive attribute that took precedence over lack of social grace. This employee's job coach, however, believed that asking co-workers to leave the kitchen was a behavior that had to be extinguished. As another example, James W. at Holy Rosary School had trouble cleaning the girl's rest room because he was reluctant to call into the room to determine whether it was occupied. James W. preferred to ask co-workers to check for him. The job coach considered this as a major roadblock to independence on the job, but when it came to the attention of the supervisor, she responded that "It's probably better that way" and assigned a female employee to check the room each day.

But job coaches did not view their perceptions as discrepant from those of supervisors. They believed that at least to a very great degree their perceptions were congruent. For example, the job coach at Ride-A-Van explained her rationale for correcting a certain behavior by saying, "If I can see it, you can bet they see it."

Job coaches felt responsible for training the supported employee. In only one instance did a job coach watch a co-worker instruct a supported employee without taking over the training directly. However, they limited their interventions to those which did not "cause a scene" because, as one job coach related, "Causing a scene at a company is the worst thing you can do."

But job coaches believed that the behavior of the supported employee was ultimately the employee's own responsibility. One job coach expressed the belief that "It's a mistake to always intervene"; and another, "He has to learn that there are consequences." Eventually, job coaches reported that they would reach a point at which they had done all they could and felt justified in withdrawing.

### Job Coach Perceptions of Supported Employees

Job coaches, as well as agency administrators and OVR counselors, viewed supported employees as "low functioning." One counselor explained that the supported employee "is very high risk. That's why we're using a job coach."

Job coaches were cautious about the chances of supported employees for success at their jobs. They believed that the supported employees they were assigned to were doing better than before, but were careful not to commit themselves to a belief that the job would be a success.

Job coaches perceived the biggest problem of supported employees to be their tendency to "miss things" or to be "distractible." Next, job coaches were concerned about how supported employees might respond to unusual events. In the opinion of one job coach, "His biggest problems are being silly and what to do if something breaks. He wouldn't know how to fix it."

Job coaches believed that supported employees required jobs that were kept to as unchanging a routine as possible, ("He hates change," summarized one job coach's view) and social interactions were kept to a minimum. James W.'s job coach attributed positive performance to social isolation: "Yesterday there was no gym and the music teacher was out. Maybe that's why he did so good."

# CHAPTER VII

# DISCUSSION

The findings of this study of the interactions, supports and perceptions of supported employment setting participants can be summarized in terms of seven main themes. These themes are summarized below. The implications of this study for our understanding of the integration of persons with disabilities within community work settings and supported employment practices are discussed in the following section. Finally, a number of recommendations can be offered for changes in the way supported employment services are provided.

## Conclusions

Although each setting was highly individual in many ways, they shared a number of common features and similar social processes . Seven main themes are summarized below.

### "Not My Real Job": The Low-status Context of Supported Employment

Supported employees held a variety of job positions with a variety of employers, but all of these could be described as entry-level, service jobs, and most involved some form of cleaning work. Nondisabled employees within these settings who held similar or related positions regarded their jobs as having low status and providing low wages, and some attempted to distance themselves from their job position with comments like "This isn't my real job."

Employees frequently complained about their jobs, and those who enjoyed their jobs mentioned opportunities for socialization, low skill demands, and low commitment required by employers as the features they found attractive. Lateness and absenteeism were common, as well as a number of unofficial work practices: working in pairs in order to socialize, switching tasks with a co-worker, working slowly, and so forth. Most employees were young adults, and most job positions turned over frequently.

### "Don't Mess with His Routine": The Atypical Design of Supported Job Positions

With the exception for some skilled occupations, several co-workers (two waitresses, four dishroom workers, etc.) usually worked at the same job. But supported employees usually held one-person job positions; that is, they were the only employee on duty performing that job. In some cases a supported job was a special position developed for a particular employee, consisting of a fragment of a typical position or a few loosely connected fragments. As a result a "co-worker" of a nondisabled employee usually meant someone who had similar responsibilities, frustrations, and concerns, but for supported employees a "co-worker" sometimes meant only a person who worked nearby or who walked past.

Supported jobs were structured to an inordinate degree, almost fossilized, into an unvarying sequence of tasks. Such structure was well-suited to the behaviorally-oriented training and data collection methods utilized by job coaches. But more importantly, it reflected a concern shared by agencies and companies that supported employees were at risk of "short-circuiting" if overstimulated or confused. Keeping interactions with co-workers to a minimum was believed to be a part of providing structure. Supported employees were also commonly employed for different or shorter work hours than their co-workers. Four supported employees held the only part-time positions at their companies.

### "We Have Fun Here": The Importance Of Social Interaction

Interactions among workers were an ever-present feature of the settings studied. Formal interactions were often required for the execution of interdependent job functions and to complete joint tasks. Indefinite boundaries or "rough edges" of job positions were common and were resolved through interactions among workers. Unplanned occurrences and work problems were daily events at most settings and were stimuli for additional interactions. Even more common were informal, purely social interactions. During work, formal interactions spilled over into brief social exchanges. When possible, employees worked in pairs to maximize these opportunities for interacting. Problems, mistakes, and other breaks in routine were occasions for social interactions. Brief exchanges were often in the form of jokes or pranks.

Non-work time and slow time were available at all of the settings, where employees interacted either as a group or in pairs or small sub-groups. Social customs, such as bringing in donuts, were evident at many work settings.

Most employees identified one or two work friends. Work friends spent break time together, talked about topics of common interest, helped each other with problems, and stood up for one another in interpersonal conflict situations.

### "She's Awful Quiet": The Restricted Social Participation of Supported Employees

Supported employees generally interacted less often than their co-workers, although there were wide variations across individuals. None of the supported employees had formed a close working relationship with any of their co-workers. Atypical jobs and schedules decreased opportunities for working jointly with a co-worker, for formal interactions to "spill over," and for participation in key social times during the work day. The substitution of job coaching services for mentor and other co-worker job training removed the possibility of an on-going personal bond between trainee and mentor, inhibited the development of communication links to co-workers, and resulted in acquisition of formal job skills, but not skills related to informal customs or tricks of the trade. In addition, the speech of some supported employees was difficult to understand, and the life experiences and responsibilities of supported employees were different from those of their co-workers. More time and effort may be required, under these circumstances, to develop a satisfying working relationship.

### "They Stick Together": The Importance of Natural Supports

Most new employees learned their jobs by being paired with an experienced worker. Mentors became sources of ongoing support beyond the initial training period. Additional support was provided for individual employees' co-workers who held the same job position, by co-workers whose tasks intersected with those of the employees, and by co-workers who were work friends. The same individual might fill more than one of these roles. Some support consisted of purely affective expressions of caring or solidarity, such as listening to complaints or making coffee for the group. More instrumental support included help in getting to work, reminders about work tasks, correcting mistakes, assisting with personal problems, and coming to a co-worker's defense when criticized or teased. Describing one such relationship, a supervisor noted "Just criticize their area and they stick together like brothers."

Supervisors also provided a variety of supports and accommodations for their subordinates. But they made unsatisfactory work friends because they were often the target of co-worker complaining and because their involvement in most settings was episodic. The "supply" of natural support was generous and flexible, although not inexhaustible.

### "Step In or Back Off?": The Hidden Messages of Job Coaches

Job coaches were provided to supported employees as sources of extra or special support. Job coaches functioned as trainers and as disciplinarians, and sometimes as mediators. But their role was unclear in many cases. At settings where they were present most of the time, the role of job coach became indistinguishable from that of supervisor. Job coaches also sometimes worked alongside supported employees as co-workers, an arrangement that mimicked in a sense the pairing of two co-workers.

Job coaches became middlepersons for social interactions, relaying communications between supported employees and other employees much as a language translator would do. Job coaches also provided some forms of help to supervisors, such as helping fine-tune the task demands and work schedule of a supported employee.

Job coach services were closely tied to formal task demands. Supported employee behaviors not included in task lists -- including informal joking and participation in social rituals -- were ignored or defined as errors.

Both supervisors and co-workers assumed that job coaches were essential to the success of the supported employee and that job coaches possess special, somewhat mysterious, knowledge and skills. They looked to job coaches for cues about how to act and how to interpret behavior. One supervisor specifically requested to be told "Should I step in or back off? You just let me know." Most often, the hidden message of job coaching was "back off." Supervisors avoided interfering with or overriding job coach decisions whenever possible, left training in the hands of the job coach, and communicated problems or special requests using the job coach as the intermediary. Supported employees consequently received less natural support than their co-workers, as exemplified by the supervisor who told each worker when to start and end break each day except for the supported employee, because his job coach had taught him to use an alarm watch.

### "Just Like Anybody Else": Discrepant Perceptions of Supported Employees

Both co-workers and supervisors felt that supported employees were productive and accepted members of their organizations. They stated that they did not view a supported employee as disabled, but "treat him just like anybody else." Some categorization of supported employees as members of a special group was evident, however, which neither co-workers nor supervisors could adequately reconcile or explain. Some co-workers spoke about the behavior of supported employees as if they were, at least in some respect, children. But they interpreted work problems of supported employees as they did those of any worker; that is, as motivational rather than as related to a disability. Supervisors were more interested in seeing signs of improvement (i.e. in knowing how to interpret behavior) than they were in seeing some specified level of performance. Many co-workers and supervisors alike reported that their perceptions of the supported employee had become more positive over time.

Supported employees enjoyed their jobs and felt accepted by their co-workers and particularly their work supervisors. But some supported employees also missed the friends they had lost contact with as a result of placement on a supported job. Most supported employees enjoyed periodic visits from their job coach, but preferred to receive job instruction from their supervisor, not their job coach.

Job coaches saw supported employees as possessing serious deficiencies and incapacities, such as an inability to deal with confusion or disruption. They believed that supported employees were "high risk" people--people who had a high probability of failure--and avoided committing themselves to any optimistic statements about vocational futures of those to whom they provided support.

## Implications

The results of this study have a number of implications for our understanding of the integration of persons with severe disabilities into community vocational settings. In addition, several implications for supported employment services follow from these results. The implications are discussed in the following sections.

### Vocational Integration of Workers with Severe Disabilities

The findings of the present study did not support those of Lignugaris/Kraft, Rule, Salzberg and Stowitschek (1986) that there is virtually no difference in the worksite interactional patterns of workers with and without disabilities. Nor did the present findings support the boundless optimism that supported employment "provides longitudinal, consistent, and intensive interactions" with nondisabled workers (Rusch, 1986). Employees with disabilities clearly engaged in fewer interactions than other employees and developed fewer and more superficial relationships.

On the other hand, the pessimism expressed by Turner (1983), that the socialization needs of workers with disabilities are "unlikely to be met outside" sheltered workshops, was not confirmed either. Supported employees were not in general lonely or only marginal participants. At several settings co-workers frequently initiated interactions and extended those that were initiated towards them by supported employees. The general picture that emerged was that social integration is enormously complex and highly dependent on the social landscape of individual settings. It may be significant that Turner's expectations were based to a large extent on studies of residential settings conducted by Edgerton and others. Vocational settings differ from residential settings in being centered around cooperative, goal-directed activity. Participation in cooperative activity helps counter negative stereotypes of people with disabilities (Smith, Edwards, Heineman & Geist, 1985). The finding that perceptions of co-workers towards supported employees became more positive over time supports such as interpretation.

The results of this study support the belief that behavior within a work setting is structured and patterned into what is popularly termed a "culture." Such behavior is governed in part by customs, norms and beliefs developed over time through interactions and cooperation. The culture of an organization persists over time and through turnover of individual members, is only partially or imperfectly articulated by the individuals who participate in it, and is only partly under the control of formal authority.

To work at a job is in part to participate in the informal rituals and customs of a work setting. This morning, the waitresses at the Clinton Inn probably sat at "their" booth to change shoes and talk informally. At Ride-A-Van, next Friday, someone will probably bring in donuts for morning break. Even informal behavior is governed by rules (Henderson & Argyle, 1986). Two corollaries of a cultural perspective are that much behavior at work is setting-specific, and that effort is required to "read" or understand an organizational culture. Together, these have implications for the type of data and the methods of data collection required to understand the social demands of work settings.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Henderson and Argyle (1985) and others, that most social support at work is derived from one or two key work colleagues rather than distributed across many persons in a work environment. Most workers maintained one or two work friendships and derived a great deal of support from these friendships.

An individual in the role of an "ally" who in effect sponsors a new employee's admission into the culture of an organization may be particularly important. Most co-workers in the present study could point to a work friend or mentor on whom they rely as an ally and a number of co-workers across several settings had an ally in place at the setting before being hired.

An ally may be even more important for workers at risk of being perceived as different. According to Sathe (1983), differentness is permitted within an organizational culture when an employee possesses "self insurance" or "cultural insurance." Self insurance refers to the possession of needed technical skills, while cultural insurance refers to the possession of a non-deviant ally within the organization. Edgerton (1967) found that individuals with mental retardation who had a nondisabled benefactor adjusted more successfully to community residential settings. It may be that allies are an important factor in admission to "cultures" of all kinds.

## Supported Employment Services

Rusch (1986) advocated a "highly parochial view" (p. iv) of job training and support. And Deal and Kennedy (1982) noted that each work setting develops "ways of doing things around here," as well as rituals for communicating to new employees that "your knowledge isn't good around here. It has to be matched with an intimate knowledge of this place" (p. 65). The findings of this study confirm a "parochial" or setting-specific approach to employment training and support. What constitutes adaptive social behavior (e.g. greeting one's co-workers, conversing at break-time) must be discovered anew at each work setting. Not only will supported employee behavior differ across settings, but adaptive "job coach" behavior will differ as well. Many behavioral interventions that are natural and acceptable in special human service environments may be out of place in natural settings (Aveno, Renzaglia & Lively, 1987). Supported employment intervention must be tailored to the unique strengths, needs, and traditions of each work setting.

Numerous authors have emphasized the role of social behavior in employment success. The depth and importance of the social aspects of work have been further highlighted by the present study. However, the implication that better social skills training of employees with disabilities is required (e.g. Breen, Haring, Pitts-Conway, & Gaylord-Ross, 1985) is less clear. The problems supported employees faced in developing working relationships were only partly skill acquisition problems. In a discussion of friendship, Stainback and Stainback (1987) cautioned that lack of friends is not always the result of a skill deficit. The same can be said of work friendships and working relationships in general.

Karan and Knight (1986) argued that traditional behavior-change approaches to employment have been too narrow, and that an adequate social support network may be at least as important for the vocational success of individuals with severe disabilities. The present study lends support to such a position, as well as to the earlier suggestion of Greenspan and Shoultz (1981) "to give careful attention to the interpersonal demands which are involved in a particular job and to the ability of the co-workers and supervisors to either tolerate interpersonally inept behavior or to provide necessary feedback to clients in a supportive and informative fashion" (p. 34). Only secondarily do Greenspan and Shoultz recommend social skills training. The availability of supported employment services has paradoxically made it easier, at least in the short term, to disregard such suggestions.

There is evidence to suggest that the way in which supported employment services were provided resulted in successful job performance on the part of the supported employee but at the same time seriously restricted their opportunities for socialization. First, supported jobs were developed through professional contacts and sales techniques rather than through natural social networks. None of the workers without disabilities obtained entry-level jobs through professional contacts. These workers often heard about job openings from friends, relatives and acquaintances and sometimes even entered the organization with social contacts already in place.

Second, supported jobs were commonly negotiated for shorter than usual work hours and were designed to be more isolated and independent than other jobs. Both of these differences served to eliminate opportunities for social interactions between supported employees and their co-workers.

Third, job coach training was focused exclusively on job tasks and work supervisors were the major source of job information and the primary contact person for job coaches. As a result, information about informal or unauthorized worker practices was unavailable to job coaches and the social demands of work settings were by and large ignored or in some cases treated as problems. And supported employees usually developed a closer working relationship with their supervisor than with any of their co-workers.

Fourth, job coach training substituted for and bypassed the mentoring experiences provided at many settings to other workers. This eliminated a customary avenue for the development of working relationships for supported employees, increasing their isolation and vulnerability. Moreover, job coaching projected a mystique of special expertise to supervisors and co-workers, who believed that they should not interfere with job coach training or override job coach decisions. Lack of confidence in interacting with the supported employee was legitimized.

And finally, job coaches utilized language and techniques unfamiliar to the business world and tended to explain supported employee behavior in disability terms. Consequently, their interactions with supervisors and co-workers often had the effect of emphasizing the differences and deviancy of supported employees.

The features of agency support services that restricted socialization cannot be attributed solely to insufficient training on the part of job coaches. Little variation occurred across job coaches of varying levels of education and experience. More significantly, many of these features are recommended in job coach training manuals and considered to be "best practices" in job coach training. Maximum routinization of tasks, for example, is universally recommended. As another example, a prominent job coach training manual (Moon, Goodall, Barcus & Brooke, 1986) lists one recommended "advocacy activity" as "explain to co-workers the disability, background, and behavioral characteristics of the employee" (p. 81).

There is little doubt that some form of external support must be provided for some adults with severe disabilities to succeed in community employment. None of the employers or agencies who participated in the present study believed that employment of the supported employee could have been successful in the absence of supported employment services. And some negative side effects of external support may be unavoidable (French & Bell, 1984). But every effort should be made to minimize or control these adverse effects before we can be confident that we are able to assist supported employees to become full-fledged members of work organizations.

## Recommendations

At the present time, supported employment appears to be heavily concentrated in a narrow range of low-status occupational areas. High turnover and low job satisfaction and commitment are characteristic features of low-status jobs. There is no reason to presume that workers with severe disabilities are any more interested in these jobs than other workers. Supported employment practitioners should distinguish carefully between entry-level jobs and low-status jobs. Many high-status occupations and valued work settings have entry-level positions which could be made available to job seekers with severe disabilities. The effort involved in expanding beyond obvious and stereotypical job selections is likely to pay off in greater job stability, satisfaction, and a higher level of social integration.

Individualized supported employment services also appear to be heavily invested in the job coach model of support. In authorizing the supported employment program, Congress did not favor or emphasize any one model of support over others, but sought to stimulate development of an open-ended and flexible array of support services. These were intended to include "salary supplements to a co-worker and other creative models" (H.R. 99-571, p. 31). Alternative models of job support have been proposed (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988) that are more unobtrusive and sensitive to the cultural features of individual settings. Such models should be encouraged and expanded, and supported employment research should include studies of the effect of variations on and alternatives to traditional job coaching on employee socialization.

In the context of the job coach model itself, the findings of the present study suggest several specific recommendations for change in the way support services are provided. These services are often described in stages, beginning with job development, through job analysis, job instruction, and ongoing follow-along (McLoughlin, Garner & Callahan, 1987; Moon, Goodall, Barcus & Brooke, 1986), and recommendations are offered for each of these stages.

Job development. Informal social contacts and casual job search methods are a common avenue for entry of new workers into service occupations. An insider can sponsor a newcomer's social acceptance. Even though many job-seekers require assistance in finding employment, assistance can resemble natural job finding strategies more closely. For example, a job developer might systematically list and contact a job seeker's network of social and community contacts, and enlist the help of friends in finding job leads on behalf of a job seeker. Because a restricted social network is characteristic of many persons with disabilities (Wesolowski, 1987), greater attention might be given to developing social contacts, membership in neighborhood organizations, and so forth, for unemployed adults with disabilities.

Work friends tend to be co-workers of the same sex and similar ages. Therefore, the age and sex of workers within a work setting might be an important consideration in the selection of a job.

Since frequent and multiple joint tasks encourage interactions, occupations where workers work as a team or in pairs, or where many workers have the same job in common, might be best for a job-seeker who might have trouble developing relationships. As a rule, cleaning occupations should be considered particularly unsuitable, because cleaning interferes with other work.

Job design. The start and end of a shift, and break and lunch times are social times at many work settings. The start of a shift is particularly important at many settings because discrepancies from an expected or ideal work routine are resolved at that time. Therefore in designing and negotiating a supported job, full-day (or full shift) jobs are probably superior to part-day jobs, other things being equal; and possibly morning half-days are preferable to afternoon half-days.

Social interactions are enhanced when frequent and multiple joint or intersecting tasks are built into the design of a job. Ideally, a supported employee should work as one of a pair of workers who complete tasks together. Some supported employees may desire or require less social contact, but those who participated in the present study: (a) in general, would rather have had more than fewer social interactions; and (b) in general, were more apt to experience confusion from lack of a co-worker on whom they could rely for help than confusion from too many interactions.

The routinization of job tasks was seen as "unreal" by some company managers, and routinization had the effect of decreasing interactions related to negotiating task "rough edges" and unplanned occurrences. But when disruptions did occur they were handled smoothly by supervisors, co-workers, and supported employees. In the process of documenting the acquisition of time management skills, Martin, Elias-Burger, and Mithaug (1987) were surprised to find that workers with severe disabilities had no trouble dealing with unavoidable disruptions in their routines. It may be that service providers can design more flexible and open-ended jobs without placing supported employees in danger of failure.

Job instruction. Both informal social demands of workplace cultures and formal tasks requirements of supported jobs require mastery, and both should be analyzed, inventoried, and taught to supported employees. Multiple informants--not supervisors alone--are required to fully capture the behavioral requirements of a job. The "cultural adult" (Wilkins, 1983) has been developed within organizational management as a technique for understanding the culture of a work organization. Such techniques are adaptable for use in supported employment services. Schein (1985) has suggested that organizational consultants use ethnographic methods to study organizational cultures. Job coaches might also benefit from adopting an ethnographic stance towards work settings.

Mentor arrangements and other internal mechanisms for the training and socialization of new employees are valuable sources of employment support. Sutton and Louis (1987) have shown that internal socialization mechanisms benefit insiders as well as newcomers. They help clarify the values and strengthen the culture of an organization.

Providers of supported employment services should consider modifying the role of the job coach from direct responsibility for job training to a more indirect, consulting function. For example, an employment specialist might assist a mentor to attain greater consistency in the use of verbal prompts. McLoughlin, Garner, and Callahan (1987) have recommended adopting the role of a consultant where possible in supported employment services. French and Bell (1984) have recommended that consultants resist the temptation to act as experts, and instead assist companies to develop their own expertise. Lippitt and Lippitt (1984) cautioned that "external consultants are a natural threat to internal helpers" (p. 510), and recommended that consultants look for ways to coordinate their efforts with internal support systems.

This recommendation contradicts the widely held belief that job coaching should be kept as private and hidden as possible. Presenting job coaching as a mysterious activity that requires special expertise may inhibit co-workers and supervisors from providing instruction, feedback, and other interactions to supported employees. A more open approach, such as making co-workers aware of the techniques being used, asking co-workers for advice in solving a problem, and so forth, might also facilitate interactions more effectively.

One skill in particular that cannot be overlooked in job training is whom, when, and how to ask for help. Employees with severe disabilities should not be expected to do their jobs "independently," while around them help is freely requested and given.

Clearly, care should be taken not to confuse the role of job coach or employment specialist with that of a work supervisor. In a recent survey (Todd, 1987), supported employment personnel listed "provide supervision to the disabled employee" as their third most important function, more important than "advocate for integrated relations with the employer and co-workers." The findings of the present study suggest that these two functions may be incompatible.

Ongoing support. An important goal of support services should be development of a network of work colleagues and allies for supported employees. This recommendation parallels that of Karan and Knight (1986) to "identify key individual functions as support people" (p. 252). Supported employees and co-workers can be assisted in the identification of mutual interests or--for those whose life experiences have been restricted--in the development of new interests and leisure pursuits. Care should be used in interpreting the behavior of supported employees to others within the work setting in ways that enhance similarities rather than differences.

Strategies to enhance an employee's membership in the culture of his or her work organization should not be lumped together into a vague and poorly understood function called "advocacy" and relegated to two or three pages at the back of a job coaching manual. They are central. Feldman's (1977) finding that among employees feelings of acceptance preceded feelings of competence is of critical significance.

Finally, the satisfaction of supported employees with their working relationship and with other facets of their job should be monitored as part of an ongoing follow-along service. Job turnover is common in entry-level jobs, and supported employees should not feel any more obligated to remain at an unsatisfying job than do other workers.

# APPENDIX

## CODING CATEGORIES AND MAJOR THEMES

### SUPPORTED JOBS

- Work Environments
- Company Characteristics
- Positions, Tasks and Schedules
- Worker Commitment and Tenure
- Worker Selection and Hiring
- Agency Program Goals
- Company Program Goals

### INTERACTIONS

- Formal Interaction among Co-workers
- Stimuli for Informal Interaction among Co-workers
- Participants in Informal Interaction among Co-workers
- Content of Informal Interaction among Co-workers
- Informal Interaction with Supervisors
- Interaction with Job Coaches
- Interaction with Customers
- Interaction between Job Coaches and Supervisors
- Formal Interaction with Supported Employees
- Informal Interaction with Supported Employees
- Joking and Teasing
- Complaining
- Jargon and Nicknames

Interactions Outside of Work

SUPPORTS

Formal Training and Support for Workers

Formal Training by Job Coaches

Company Perceptions of Job Coaching

Informal Help with Work by Co-workers

Informal Help with Personal Problems by Co-workers

Supervision of Workers

Supervisor Help with Personal Problems

Job Modifications and Adaptations

Asking for Help

Defending Against Teasing

Supported Employee Perceptions of Job Coaching

Job Coach Fading

Responses to Problems and Errors

Limits on Support

Job Coach Interaction with Co-workers

Job Coach Beliefs and Jargon

PERCEPTIONS

Supervisor Perceptions of Supported Employees

Co-worker Perceptions of Supported Employees

Job Coach and Agency Perceptions of Supported Employees

Perception of Errors and Problems

Job Coach Influence on Perceptions

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Appendix 16

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